UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SOCIAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT PRACTICES,

CUSTOMER EMPOWERMENT AND LOYALTY OF CUSTOMERS OF

HOTELS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA
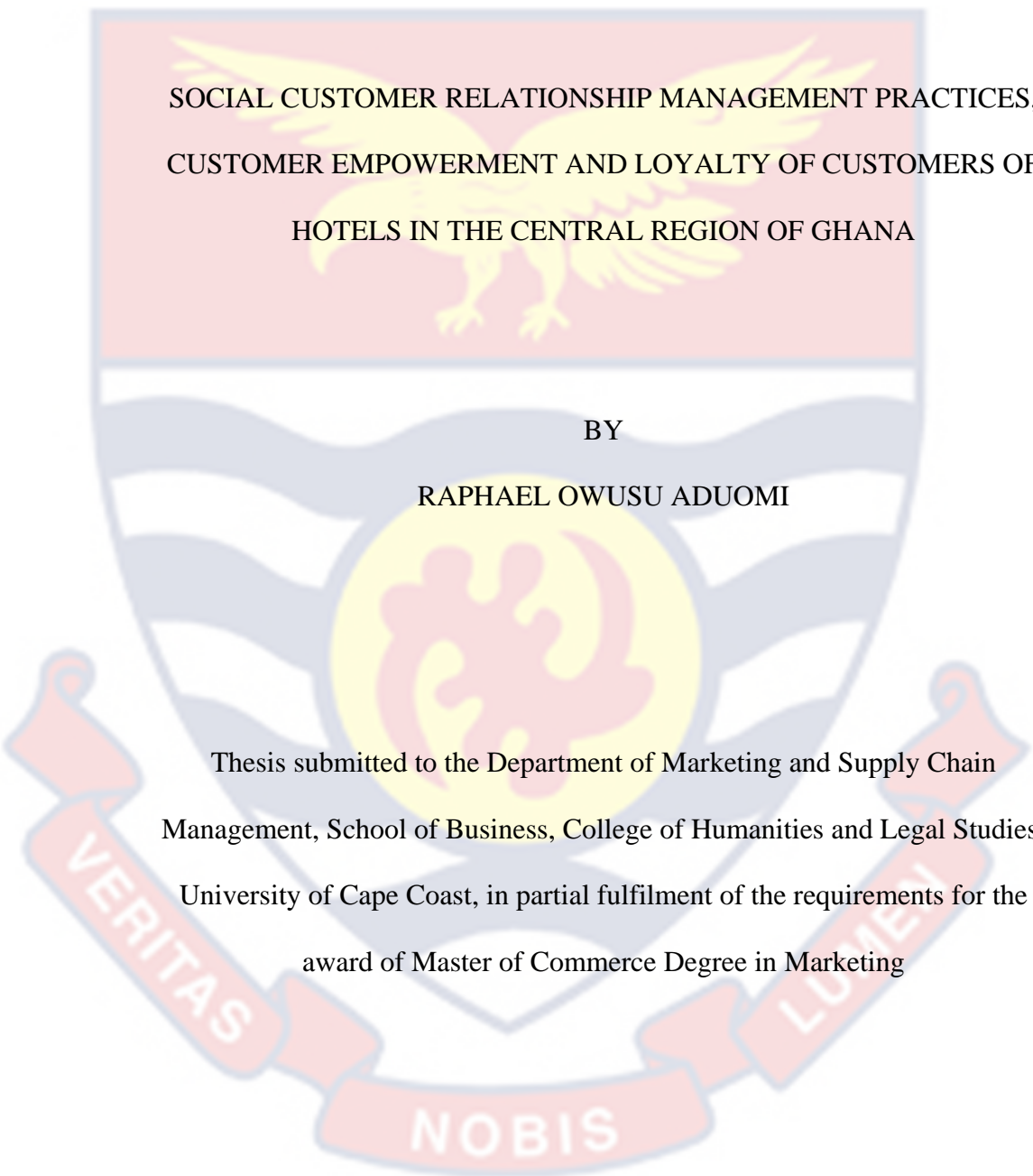
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HOTELS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

BY

RAPHAEL OWUSU ADUOMI

Thesis submitted to the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain

Management, School of Business, College of Humanities and Legal Studies,

University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

award of Master of Commerce Degree in Marketing

AUGUST 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

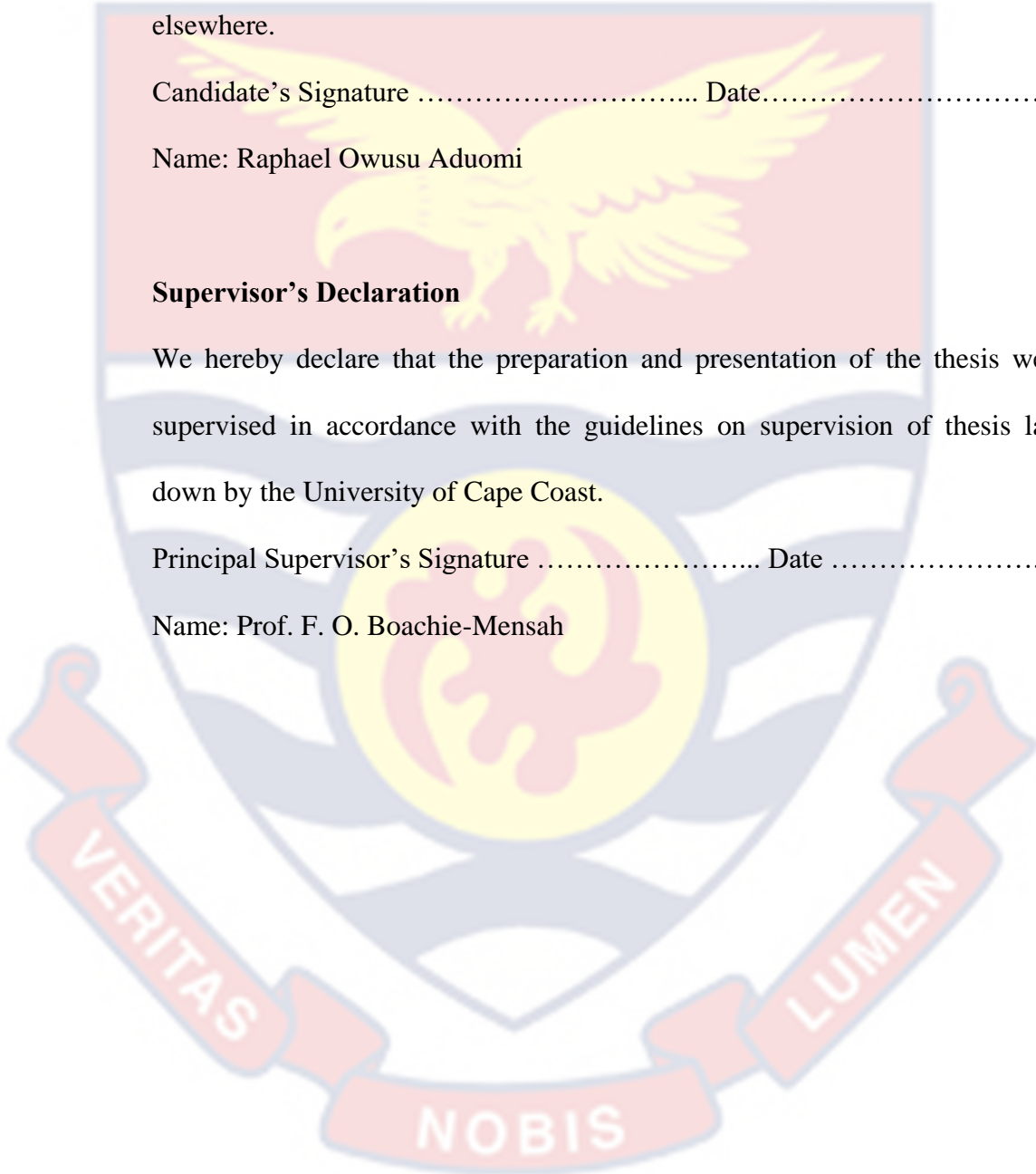Candidate's Signature ……………………... Date…………………………

Name: Raphael Owusu Aduomi

Supervisor's Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature …………………... Date …………………...

Name: Prof. F. O. Boachie-Mensah

ABSTRACT

In today's fast-evolving digital landscape, hotel businesses in Ghana are adopting social CRM practices to connect with customers and cultivate loyalty. This research, concentrating on the Ghanaian hotel sector, seeks to examine the influence of SCRM practices on CL, particularly focusing on the role of CE. The relationship theory and empowerment theory, positivism philosophy, quantitative research method, and explanatory research design were employed. A group of 370 hotel guests from central region of Ghana took active role in the study. The researcher employed IBM SPSS V27 to prepare the data and Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM v4) for data analysis. The findings showed that effectively implemented SCRM practices can significantly improve customer loyalty through customer empowerment. Moreover, the results discovered that CK had a negative effect on both CE and CL which rejected H1a. However, improvements in customer service quality, increased social media/online community usage, utilizing integrated marketing channels, and offering value-added services had a constructive effect on both CE and CL. Interestingly, despite the positive effect of online communities on loyalty its effect was non-significantly within the context. It was, therefore, recommended that hotel firms should foster customer empowerment by encouraging various psychological attachments, because the results revealed that market advantage favours the nimblest hotels that pawn the ever-changing market conditions and integrate real-time customer empowerment and SCRM practices.

KEY WORDS

Social CRM

Online communities/social media usage

Customer relationship management

Integrated marketing channels

Customer service quality
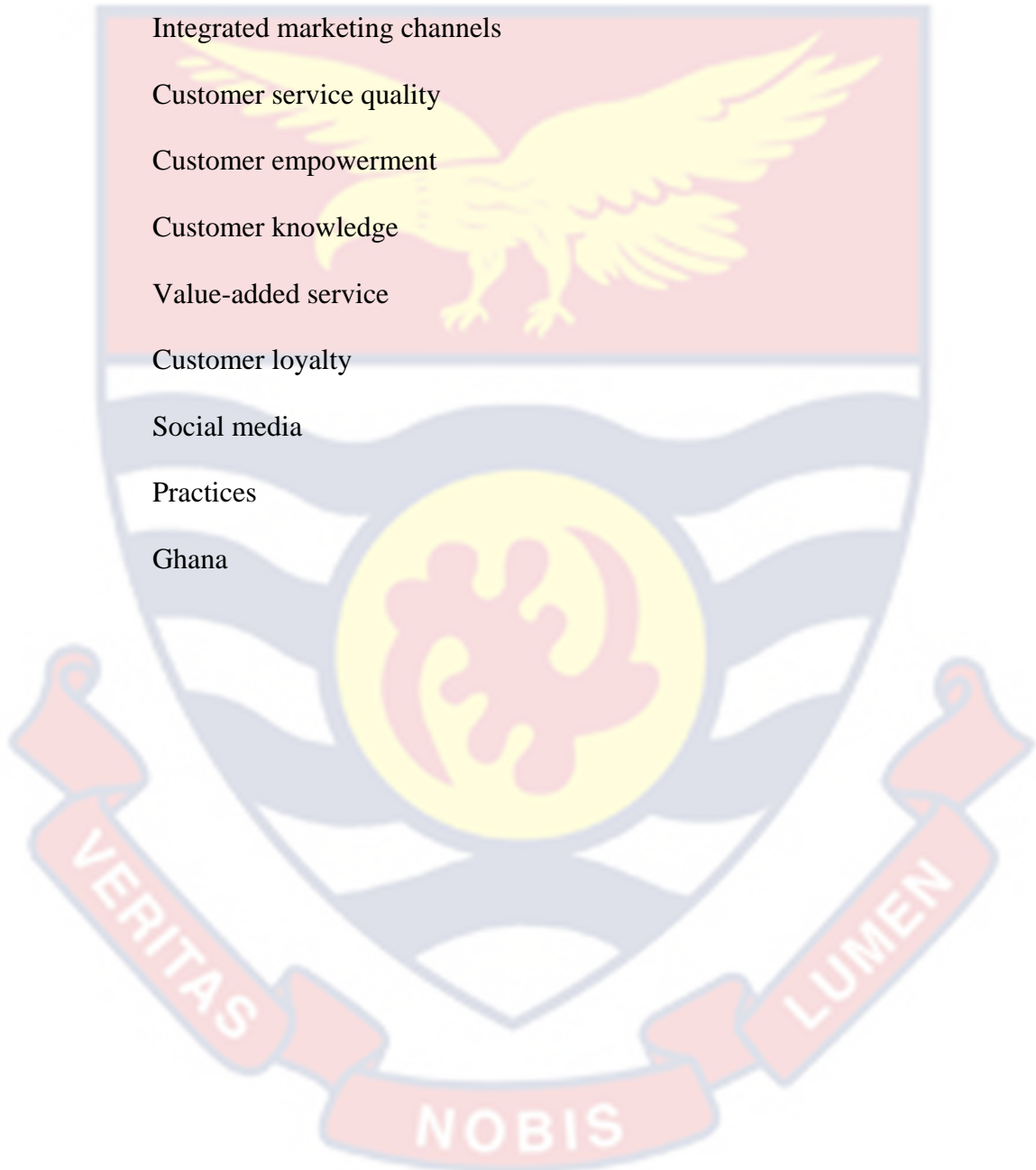
Customer empowerment

Customer knowledge

Value-added service

Customer loyalty

Social media

Practices

Ghana

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DEDICATION

To my family

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

SCRM: Social Customer relationship management

CSQ: Customer service quality

CE: Customer empowerment

OC: Online communities/social media usage

CK: Customer knowledge

VAS: Value-added service

CL: Customer loyalty

CRM: Customer relationship management

IMC: Integrated marketing channels
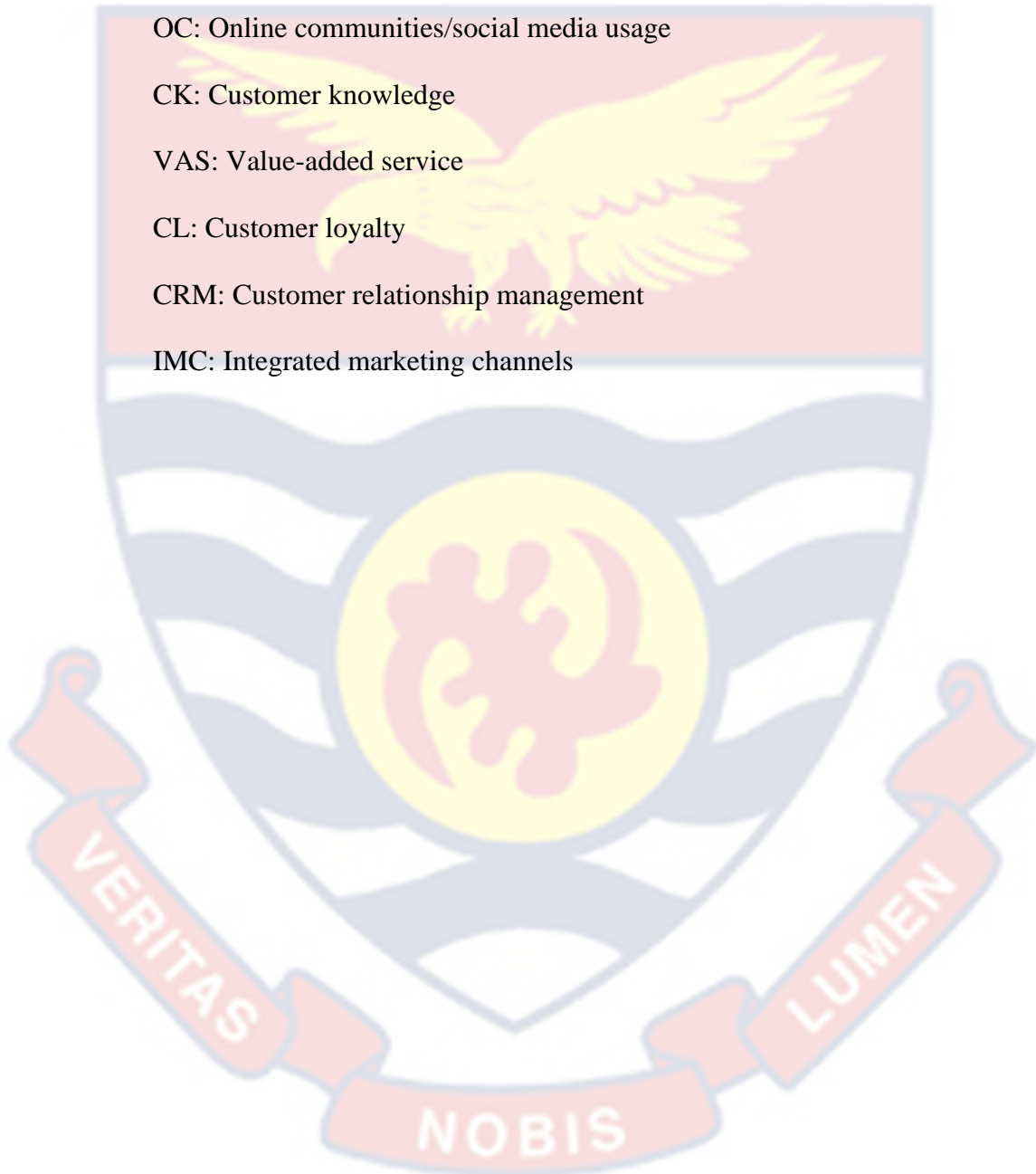
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary technological advancements have transformed the approach to thinking and executing tasks. The conventional perspective of marketing has evolved into a novel paradigm, driven by digital innovations. According to Goel's 2020 study, various nations have successfully harnessed digital platforms and marketing strategies to cater to their evolving customer base. However, some countries have struggled to adapt effectively to this digital transformation. The idea of CRM has undergone substantial evolution in recent times. It has shifted from solely focusing on financial connections with customers to fostering both commercial and interactive relationships with them.

Essentially, there has been a development in Customer Relationship Management which is referred as SCRM or CRM 2.0. This new method combines traditional CRM with social media, providing advantages for both businesses and their customers (Marolt *et al*., 2020). The core motive of this study is to observe the connection amid implementing social CRM practices and its influence on customer loyalty, resulting from customer empowerment.

Background to the Study

Global service companies according to (Das & Hassan, 2022), are faced with increasing pressure to be more socially answerable and sustainable in a competitive landscape that is constantly evolving. This push towards greater company value and customer-centricity has led to a transformation in CRM towards Social CRM. SCRM involves considering social, economic,

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and environmental impacts when establishing long-term, fruitful customer relationships.

However, given the popularity and wide use of different social networks, as demonstrated by (Mohammad, 2019; Dow *et al*., 2021; Rahamneh *et al*., 2023), organisations are trying to be present on these platforms in order to reach their large and diversified populations. In a similar manner, Soliman and Kamel (2021), emphasized that social CRM systems, which gather data and methods from various communication platforms such as customer's phones, emails, and social media, are regarded the main components and foundations of CRM practices and strategies.

For a long time, businesses have focused on prioritizing customers, and their success largely depends on how they manage customer relationships (Al-Hawary *et al*., 2017; Mohammad *et al*., 2020; Gupta *et al*., 2023). As stated by (Alshawabkeh *et al*., 2023) and (Al-Nawafah *et al*., 2022), numerous organizations have utilized social networks as a means to handle customer relationships involve utilizing communication tools and platforms to facilitate interactions between organizations and their clients, irrespective of time or location restrictions. Turoń (2022), emphasizes that social media networks show a substantial part in fostering continuous communication amid organizations and their customers. They achieve this by creating connections and budding opportunities for customers to express their views and suggestions on enhancing products or services.

As the internet and digital technology have progressed, consumers demands and expectations have changed significantly. Communication methods, particularly through social media, have transformed, leading to

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consumers expecting more direct interaction with brands, individuals openly express their views and preferences. They desire brands easily reachable and available through various channels for seamless interaction and involvement (Goel, 2020; Reynolds-Pearson & Hyman, 2020). This swing in consumer attitude has led traditional marketing practices to evolve. Marketing professionals must now concentrate on understanding how consumers engage with brands, their reactions, and involvement in the realm of marketing preferments. User-generated content and two-way communication play a vital aspect of Web 2.0, empowering customers in social interactions.

In the research carried out by (Alolayyan *et al.*, 2018) and (Al-Hawary & Alhajri, 2020). It is clear that, over time, there has been an growing emphasis on the idea of loyalty for businesses within the hotel sector, communication, and transportation sectors, among others. Several factors have contributed to enhancing customer loyalty, including positive experiences that leave an impression on customers' minds, leading them to maintain a certain position. Loyalty can be seen as a behaviour characterized by constant engagements in the absence of considering alternatives or as an attitude where individuals form judgments and feelings about the service and motivate colleagues to engage with their organisations (Al-Hawary & Obiadat, 2021).

Conferring to a study by Chatterjee et al. (2022), customer loyalty is crucial in the hotel industry as it refers to the aptitude of an organization to hold existing customers for a long period. The study highlights that loyalty is a vital issue in today's modest and dynamic hotel market, where customer churn is a significant concern, with approximately 15% of customers leaving the hotel sector. To maintain customer loyalty, hotels should deliver outside the

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core products and services, as well as deliver exceptional experiences to customers. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that customer loyalty is less costly than acquiring new customers, making it a vital area for hotel management to focus on.

Kotler and Keller's (2015) explanation of customer loyalty describes it as a genuine dedication by customers to repeatedly buy their preferred product, even when faced with external influences. Customer loyalty has three main aspects, with the first being cognitive loyalty. This form of loyalty is built upon a customer's ability to obtain information that highlights a specific brand's superiority compared to others. This information can stem from personal experiences or those of others, ultimately reflecting the product's performance and quality in relation to related offerings (Seddik & Younsi, 2020).

Emotional loyalty in customers arises from their admiration for a product or service, which is based on their personal perspective rather than the service provider's viewpoint. Loyalty, in this context, is preserved by recognizing the rudiments that impact a guest's emotional bond with a product. In contrast, transactional loyalty is exhibited through consistent purchasing actions, fuelled by a powerful motivation to surpass any hindrances they may encounter. This behavior leads to a self-disposition stage, where the customer consistently repurchases the product. Value-added services play a crucial role in empowering customers and making them feel in control during the decision-making process. (Lezghed & Bersali, 2021; Seddik & Younsi, 2020).

Comprehending customer loyalty is pivotal for businesses to thrive and endure, as stated by (Etale & Uranta, 2022). Kotni and Divya (2019),

emphasize that grasping why consumers behave in a specific manner is essential for executing marketing tasks across various levels, adapting to the evolving and diverse requirements of customers. Moreover, these authors underline that a thorough comprehension of actions that foster customer loyalty allows marketers to better understand consumer preferences. Essentially, the capacity to persistently discern unmet consumer needs and provide efficient, effective solutions surpassing competitors is the foundation for a business's longevity, profitability and growth.

Customer empowerment is a new approach to delivering exceptional customer experiences, allowing customers to feel more in control and better understand their interactions. Hotels are educating their customers and incorporating customer interaction into their systems to achieve this. Research has shown that customer empowerment is crucial in the hotel industry, as it enables customers to make informed decisions about their hotel choices, leading to increased satisfaction (Chatterjee et al., 2022).

According to Hunt (2002) and Rudner (1966), a theory is a scientific understanding that explains and predicts phenomena through systematized structures. This perspective accentuates the relevance of clarification in science, as many academics argue that description is the core of scientific inquiry. Scientific explanations are seen as responses to "why" and "how" inquiries (Hempel, 1966). In this sense, the drive of relationship marketing theory is to provide structured frameworks that explain relationship marketing marvels, providing answers to "why" and "how" questions. This study aligns with relationship marketing theory by providing explanations that address these questions.

The thought of relationship marketing has been well-defined in various conducts. Berry (1983) describes it as enticing, preserving, and enhancing customer relationships. Gronroos (1996) views it as identifying and establishing associations with customers and other participants through interactive activities, by the goal of summiting the ideas of all parties involved. This research goals to further discover relationship marketing by incorporating the idea of customer empowerment, which is a new approach to providing excellent customer experiences. According to Zimmerman (2000), customer empowerment involves offering customers more control and understanding of their social interactions by providing them with information gathered from these interactions. This study will draw on the theory of empowerment to strengthen its theoretical foundation and provide a more comprehensive understanding of relationship marketing.

In Ghana's hotel industry, growth has been driven by the influx of international chains and local establishments. To stand out in a competitive market, hotels are adopting innovative strategies to differentiate themselves and retain customers. One approach gaining popularity is customer empowerment, which involves giving customers the freedom to make choices and control their experiences. Research has shown that customer empowerment can take a substantial impact on customer loyalty in the hotel sector (Kim et al., 2020). When customers feel empowered, they are more prospective to be pleased with their stay, more probable to coming back to the hotel, and more likely to commend it to others (O'Connor et al., 2020).

In Ghana, where customer loyalty is a critical aspect in defining a hotel's success, empowering customers can be a key differentiator for hotels

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looking to stand out from the competition. Learning from findings by Boateng *et al*. (2020) found that hotels in Ghana that implemented customer empowerment strategies, such as providing personalized services and allowing customers to customize their stays, saw a significant increase in CL. Similarly, findings by Osei *et al*. (2020) discovered that hotels that engaged with customers through social media and provided real-time updates on their stays were possible to shape solid relationships with customers and increase CL. However, not all hotels in Ghana have adopted customer empowerment strategies, and many continue to focus on traditional methods of managing customer relationships (Amoako *et al*., 2020). To continue competitive, hotels must acclimatise to changing consumer preferences and prioritize customer empowerment.

Unfortunately, studies on SCRM practices are primarily conducted in advanced countries, notwithstanding the fact that emerging countries also utilize it and experience its benefits (Cheng & Shiu, 2019). Upon examining the scope of previous SCRM practice research, it becomes evident that it is confined to tourism and SMEs, leaving a significant gap in the hotel industry. Fast-forward, few studies conducted in the hotel sector has largely been emphasised in other African and Sub-Sharan African settings (Mokhtar *et al*., 2019; Onwusoro 2014; Anorue *et al*., 2021; Honesta *et at*., 2020; Bukola & Adesola, 2019; Okeke *et al*., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The Ghanaian hotel sector has acknowledged significant growth in recent years, with the number of tourists increasing by 12.5% between 2018 and 2020 (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2020). The hotel sector is a vital

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component of the country's tourism industry, leading to a momentous portion of the country's GDP. However, despite this growth, many hotels in Ghana struggle to hold customers and shape long-term relationships. This is because they often fail to adopt effective social customer relationship management (SCRM) strategies, which are critical for building customer loyalty (Kotler *et al*., 2020).

However, the sector faces intense competition from other regional hotel facilities, which has led to a decrease in customer loyalty and an increase in customer churn. According to a study by Mensah *et al.* (2020), customer loyalty is a critical factor in determining customer retention and repeat business in the hotel sector. Despite this, many hotels in Ghana have failed to develop effective strategies to foster customer loyalty. A study by the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) found that only 20% of tourists return to Ghana, indicating a low level of customer loyalty (GTA, 2018).

Subsequently, the report presented that many hotels in Ghana do not have necessary technological capacity to lavish effective rewards programs that incentivize customers to return or refer friends and family. Notwithstanding, hotels in Ghana often lack a deep understanding of their customers' needs and preferences, making it difficult to tailor their services to meet these needs and build loyalty (African Business Central, 2019). Numerous organisations have experienced a loss of past clients and struggle to bring in new ones.

Social CRM been identified as a key approach for building CL in the hospitality industry (Kotler *et al*., 2020). SCRM practices involves using customer knowledge, service quality, online communities/social media usage,

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integrated marketing channels, and value-added service to engage with customers, respond to their queries, and provide personalized services. However, many hotels in Ghana have not fully leveraged social media space to engross with their customers, leading to a deterioration in CL.

Customer empowerment is another critical factor that can facilitate the relationship between SCRM and customer loyalty. Empowered customers are more probable to be satisfied with their experiences and more likely to return to a hotel (Spreng *et al*., 2022). However, many hotels in Ghana have not provided their customers per the vital information and control to make well-versed decisions about their stays. A study by (Owusu-Ansah *et al*., 2022) found that hotels in Ghana that provided customers with personalized services and engaged with them on social media platforms had higher customer satisfaction rates compared to those that did not. Additionally, customers who were empowered through access to information about hotel services and amenities had advanced levels of satisfaction likened to those who were not empowered.

However, despite these findings, many hotels in Ghana have not adopted SCRM strategies that empower customers. For example, a study by Agyeman *et al*. (2021) discovered that many hotels in Accra did not provide their customers with information about hotel services and amenities before arrival, leading to dissatisfaction and churn. Research shows that customers pay attention to how hotels handle service recovery processes on social media space which includes Hootsuite, Sprinklr, Holiday Check, Make My Trip, Trip Advisor, and Twitter before making a final booking decision (Kim & Baker, 2020). To navigate this dynamic environment, this research purposes to

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investigate the effect of social customer relationship management (SCRM) practices on customer loyalty (CL), with customer empowerment (CE) serving as a mediator in the hotel sector in the central region of Ghana.

Purpose of the Study

Basically, this research is purposed to observe the effect of adopting SCRM practices on customer loyalty via customer empowerment within the hotel sector in Ghana.

Research Objective

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

1. To determine the effect of SCRM practices on customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

2. To observe the effect of social CRM practices on CE in the hotel industry.

3. To examine the effect of customer empowerment on customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

4. To assess the mediating role of customer empowerment on the effect of social customer relationship management practices on CL in the hotel industry.

Research Hypothesis

Basically, this study pursues to test the following hypothesis surged from the study aims of the study;

1. H1a: Customer knowledge has a positive effect on customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

2. H1b: Customer service quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

3. H1c: Value-added Services has a positive effect on Customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

4. H1d: Online communities /use of social media has a positive effect on customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

5. H1e: Integrated marketing channels has a positive effect on customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

6. H2a: Customer knowledge has a positive effect on customer empowerment in the hotel industry.

7. H2b: Customer service quality has a positive effect on customer empowerment in the hotel industry.

8. H2c: Value-added Services has a positive effect on customer empowerment in the hotel industry.

9. H2d: Online communities /use of social media have a positive effect on customer empowerment in the hotel industry.

10. H2e: Integrated marketing channels has a positive effect on customer empowerment in the hotel industry.

11. H3: Customer empowerment has a positive effect on Customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

12. H4a: Customer empowerment mediate the effect of customer knowledge on Customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

13. H4b: Customer empowerment mediate the effect of Customer service quality on Customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

14. H4c: Customer empowerment mediate the effect of Online communities /use of social media on Customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

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15. H4d: Customer empowerment mediate the relationship of Integrated marketing channels and Customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

16. H2e: Customer empowerment mediate the effect of Value-added service on Customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

Significance of the Study

This research will have substantial impacts on hotel businesses and management, as it can assist in enhancing customer loyalty, a crucial factor for their survival in the present digital era of socially active customers. From a practical standpoint, it will be a helpful tool for hotel and restaurant managers to effectively adopt SCRM strategies to establish strong customer relationships and foster loyalty (Dewnarain, 2018; Harrigan *et al*., 2018). Moreover, these findings will be crucial foundations for businesses pursuing economic and financial prosperity.

Additionally, this study aims to provide significant theoretical advancements in the hospitality sector, particularly in social CRM. Although Social CRM is acquiring importance in the hospitality industry, this research will create and validate a model demonstrating how integrating social media technologies with CRM activities can enhance CL. Moreover, this research intends to establish a theoretical structure that will assist hotel administrators in formulating thoughtful choices concerning the application of successful social CRM practices.

Finally, the outcomes of the study will assist hotel industry policy makers in designing successful SCRM practices and benefiting from real-time behavioral comprehension. The study will also emphasize customer empowerment as a crucial factor for both customer and company advantages,

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in contrast to prior research in the hotel field that solely examines whichever word of mouth or customer loyalty (Wali, Wright, & Uduma, 2015; Yen & Tang, 2015), this investigation will enrich existing knowledge by exploring both elements, which are crucial indicators for assessing a customer's overall value to a business.

Delimitation

This study will focus on the central region and the units of analysis would be on hotels guests who visit the premises. The study will measure social CRM practices by employing customer service quality, customer knowledge, online communities, integrated marketing channels, and value-added services cited from previous literature while customer loyalty as the dependent variable will be proxied for the guidelines and directives guiding CL as customer retaining, customer trust, and positive word of mouth. The customer empowerment will be measured using two contemporary approaches, which are customer responds and customer engagement.

Limitations

Given that the study will solely concentrate on hotel guest in the region, it is possible that not all of them will be reached or willing to share private details, which could enhance the study and improve the research data's validity and reliability. The issue of social desirability may also arise, potentially affecting response validity. To address this challenge, privacy and anonymity of the participants will be guaranteed. The dispersed nature of the respondents will make the data collection phase difficult, as the researcher will need to conduct multiple follow-ups to complete and submit the questionnaire.

Definition of Terms

Social media: social media refers to the interaction between people who communicate, disseminate, share thoughts, information, and ideas within virtual communities and networks through online platforms.

Customer loyalty: Kotler and Keller (2015) presented customer loyalty as a genuine pledge made by customers to repeatedly purchase their preferred product, even when influenced by external factors.

Customer empowerment: As presented by Acar and Puntoni (2016), CE as a form of engagement that allows customers to have control over a company's offerings by providing them with opportunities to influence the products and services.

Customer Relationship Management: A business strategy that merges marketing, service, and technology is aimed at fostering enduring relationships with clients. This method enhances customer worth, fosters loyalty, and maintains their commitment (Sadek, 2020).

Social Customer Relationship Management: is a business strategy that utilizes social media to engage customers, fostering trust and customer loyalty (Li *et al*., 2020).

Customer Knowledge: is presented as a company's comprehension in terms of present and upcoming customer requirements and inclinations, Lee, Naylor, and Chen (2011) underlines their importance.

Quality of Customer Service: CSQ encompasses offering prompt, efficient, and amicable assistance to clients while fostering strong connections with them. This also involves addressing customer concerns in a timely manner and efficiently resolving any complaints.

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Value-Added Services: These are supplementary benefits that customers can enjoy by acquiring a product or service. By going beyond the core offering, businesses can differentiate themselves and attract a wider audience through additional features and support.

Organisation of the Study

The study will be organised into five main sections. The first part acts as an introduction, covering the context, the issue at hand, the goals, and either the research questions or proposed hypotheses. This chapter isn't confined to these aspects; it also includes the study's significance, delimitations, limitations, and organisational structure. Chapter two involves a literature review, sourced from relevant or prior studies and literature. Chapter three focuses on the methodology employed. Often referred to as the study's roadmap, it includes research design, population, sample size, sampling technique, data gathering tools, and data analysis methods. Chapter four presents the study's results and discussion, encapsulating the findings. Lastly, Chapter five, being the concluding chapter, summarizes the findings, offers conclusions, and proposes recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary aim of this study is to consider the conclusion of incorporating social CRM practices and CE on CL in Ghana. This chapter delves into and contrasts the findings from previous studies regarding social CRM practices and CE's influence on CL. The subsequent section of the research discusses the theoretical foundations, empirical studies, conceptual reviews, and a conceptual framework supporting the research. Although there are multiple theories supporting this study, it primarily relies on the relationship marketing theory by Berry (1983) and Jackson (1985). Additionally, the study is grounded in the empowerment theory, which posits that individuals can influence or control their lives (Zimmerman, 2000).

Theoretical Review

Several theories have been asserted as theories that draw the relationship among social CRM practices, CE and CL, however, for the aim of this study, the theories discussed below served as the foundation on which this study was premised.

Relationship Marketing Theory

The foundation of the study lies in the theory of relationship marketing, introduced by the American scholars Berry (1983) and Jackson (1985). These academics were the pioneers who initially presented the idea of relationship marketing within the marketing domain. Berry (1983) emphasized in a conference about service marketing that relationship marketing is a marketing technique for businesses to obtain, preserve, and improve efficient connections with customers. After conducting an extensive study on the

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marketing process in the service industry, it was perorated that the main objective of enterprise marketing not only focuses on drawing in fresh clients but also to focus on practices aimed at preserving existing client. Over a protracted period of time, the goal is to enhance the mutual long-term interests of both parties through collaborative relationships. Additionally, the study highlights that the expense involved in retaining an already established client is substantially less compared to the expenditure required to attract a new customer, and nurturing relationships with long-term consumers is more economical than developing new ones.

In essence, Jackson (1985) refined the concept of marketing in the industrial sector. He asserted the core of relationship marketing is to attract, create, and preserve close association with business clients. The significance of relationship marketing theory to this research primarily concentrates on the aspect of its emphasis on the benefits gained from maintaining and retaining existing customers through appropriate practices. This research utilizes SCRM practices, it demonstrates that maintaining existing clients is more economical compared to attracting new customers. As a result, social CRM, aligned with the principles of relationship marketing, fosters repeat purchases and CL in the hotel industry.

Relationship marketing suggests that managing customer relationships effectively can lead to strong bonds with customers, resulting in long-term commitment and loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Moreso, this concept shows that businesses with strong CL have a substantial edge in profit maximization compared to those without loyalty (Berry, 1995). CRM acts as a means to draw in clients, develop robust connections with vendors and purchasers,

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maintain and preserve them successfully through efficient customer relationship management (Balaji, 2015). Additionally, CRM possess the potential to improve customer satisfaction and nurture loyalty (Agrawal, 2020).

Relationship Marketing theory (RMT) provides a valuable framework for understanding customer relationships, it has been critiqued for its restrictions in addressing the complexities of contemporary marketing environments (Gronroos, 1990). Specifically, RMT focuses on one-sided, transactional relationships between firms and customers, neglecting the part of customers as dynamic participants in shaping their relationships with hotels.

Empowerment Theory

Julian Rappaport, an American psychologist introduced the concept of empowerment in the 1980s. Empowerment is seen as a complex communal activity which helps people attain mastery over their own existence. A significant aspect of this empowerment involves self-reliance among individuals or groups, and the ability of customers to make choices regarding the specific brand of products or services they prefer. Technology and social media presence of hotel companies serve as crucial catalysts for customer empowerment.

As per the empowerment theory, power is not finite, and it grows as individuals form connections. This interconnectedness fosters greater empowerment among people. On an individual scale, they can boost their ability to tackle issues by collaborating with others. This collaboration allows them to influence task completion and issue resolution, drawing from their personal sense of empowerment (Scheyvens & Watt, 2021).

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Within the realm of social media, promoting shifts in organizations and legislation that impede self-help can facilitate greater independence for individuals. Social work emphasizes assisting people in understanding their role as change agents, recognizing social workers should view themselves as equals working alongside clients, instead of solely focusing on solving their problems. This approach involves teaching clients about their requirements, rights, and accessible solutions, ultimately aiming to encourage self-empowerment and personal growth.

In essence, customer empowerment boosts customers' confidence and encourages them to take action. The concept of self-efficacy, which involves developing personal power, strength, or mastery, effects an individual's ability to act when authority is lacking. The concept of customer self-efficacy is considered individualistic, as it revolves around an individual's credence in their capacity to attain an objective is essential for personal growth and self-empowerment. This self-belief can significantly impact one's life. Nevertheless, a shift in self-efficacy should be accompanied by tangible improvements in one's life to be considered genuine empowerment (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010).

In relation to this, Organizational empowerment in the context of business signifies the practices and rules that allow juniors or those of lower rank to effectively carry out their job-related tasks. A key aspect of this concept is the belief that managers encourage their staff involvement in decision-making processes and equip them with the necessary power, accountability, and understanding to make selections. In this context, top-level managers initiate the process and then spread it throughout the organisation by

entrusting decision-making power to subordinate staff members to perform their duties. Factors such as corporate procedures, laws, organizational culture, and structure can significantly influence organizational empowerment.

Relation of Theories to the Research

The study of SCRM practices, CL, and the mediating role of CE in hotel sector in Ghana highpoints the relevance of comprehending the dynamic relationships between hotels, customers, and social media platforms. While Relationship Marketing theory (RMT) provides a valuable framework for understanding customer relationships, it has been critiqued for its limitations in addressing the complexities of contemporary marketing environments (Gronroos, 1990). Specifically, RMT focuses on one-sided, transactional relationships between firms and customers, neglecting the part of customers as active participants in shaping their relationships with hotels.

To complement the weaknesses of RMT, this study draws on Empowerment theory (ET), which posits that customers' logic of control and autonomy over their relations with hotels is a vital factor in defining their loyalty and satisfaction (Kumar et al., 2013). ET emphasizes the standing of empowering customers to make informed decisions, take ownership of their experiences, and engage in co-creation processes with hotels. By incorporating ET into the study, this research aims to explore how hotel managers can foster a sense of customer empowerment through SCRM practices, such as social media engagement, personalized communication, and co-creation opportunities. This approach recognises that customers are not inert heirs of marketing messages but rather active participants who shape their own experiences and interactions with hotels.

Furthermore, the inclusion of ET allows for a more nuanced thoughtful of the intricate relationships amid hotels, customers, and social media platforms. By examining the mediating role of CE in the relationship between SCRM practices and CL, this study can provide perceptions into how hotels can leverage social media to create value for customers and ultimately drive loyalty and retention. In conclusion, incorporating ET into this study topic offers a extra comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between hotels, customers, and social media space. By acknowledging the importance of customer empowerment in shaping their relationships with hotels, this study can offer appreciated insights for hotel managers seeking to develop effective SCRM practices that drive customer loyalty and retention.

Conceptual Review

This section concentrated on the general ideas and the behaviour of the variables discussed in this study.

Dimension of SCRM Practices

In the period between the early and mid-2000s, a novel type of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) emerged, which was named SCRM or CRM 2.0 (Greenberg, 2010). This shift was largely driven by the growing prevalence of widely-used social media networks, such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Google, and others. Social CRM emphasizes on fostering collaborative conversations with customers and enhancing customer relationships (Trainor et al., 2014). This advanced approach to CRM not only increases the data available to CRM software but also offers marketers a more efficient way to connect with consumers through a new channel (Greenberg, 2010).

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In the present era, a majority of service industry businesses have known the relevance of implementing effective CRM practices. These practices are aimed at acquiring probable customers, enhancing the loyalty of existing customers, and optimizing their worth or significance they hold throughout their entire existence. CRM is a well-recognized and frequently used approach for handling and cultivating the company's relationships with potential customers, clients, and potential sales leads. It consists utilizing technology to optimize and synchronize various business operations, majorly concentrating on sales, but also encompassing marketing, customer service, and technical support. This approach aims to optimize the overall customer involvement and business efficiency. CL is central for all businesses to obtain a competitive edge, various strategies can be employed that's marketing practices, particularly through the implementation of CRM (Ehigie, 2006). Numerous researchers have demonstrated that the expense of preserving existing customers is significantly lower compared to obtaining new customers for service organizations (Ndubisi & Wah, 2005; Zablah, Bellenger, & Johnston, 2004).

Furthermore, In the study by Gamage *et al*. (2021) described social CRM as the utilization of techniques and resources that enhance customer satisfaction and experience interaction, harness the collective knowledge of expanding the customer base and strengthening the connection between a business and its clientele. This involves understanding customer desires and how they engage with a business's touchpoints, which includes sales and customer service. SCRM can be seen as implementing platforms like Facebook to carry out a CRM practices. SCRM is a modern a business

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strategy that enables two-way interaction with customers via social media channels like Facebook and Twitter as proposed by (Ibrahim, 2022).

A comprehensive and organized analysis of various theoretical works or studies steered by Tamilmani *et al*. (2018) revealed that the majority of studies examining social communication methods primarily concentrated on four aspects: social media platforms, social media users, organizational contexts involving relationship between social media and the society. Research has proposed a framework for the hotel sector, comprising three aspects: social interacting, empowerment, and online instructor. These elements are designed to advance customer loyalty. By using social networks, organizations can assess customer opinions and evaluate themselves.

Research by Trainor *et al*. (2014) examining the correlation amid social media and customer relationship practices, the researchers assessed an organisation's social capabilities through three dimensions: gathering information, distributing information, and being responsive. In a study by Mangold and Faulds (2009), it presented three essential practices for SCRM: Evaluating customer concerns, leveraging social media networking platforms, and merging social media content with customer-focused procedures. To apply SCRM in this study, two main dimensions will be utilized: traditional CRM practices and social media. This approach is braced by prior research conducted by (Yawised *et al*., 2013; Marolt *et al.,* 2015; Jacewicz & Cho, 2015; Suhasini & Kumar, 2018; Yawised *et al*., 2018).

At present, social CRM is viewed as a method that provides essential, relevant, and precise information through online social platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Rouse, 2010). As social media grows, companies can

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create their own pages and effortlessly gather insights from potential customers about their products. These platforms are advantageous for offering swift responses to customers' queries and providing solutions through personalized messages. By employing SCRM practices, companies can achieve a competitive edge by providing optimal solutions and fitting items to clients in an appropriate manner. Many studies show that social CRM is essential for businesses. The CRM system helps organizations meet customer needs and preferences by dividing markets and addressing them through customized products. This system can enhance communication with customers by interacting with them, as stated by Munaiah and Mohan (2017).

Studies show that companies who successfully align the service approaches with social media space can experience increased viability according to (Sousa & Voss, 2006 and Weinberg & Berger, 2011). The significance of SCRM has surpassed that of traditional Customer Relationship Management (CRM) due to its widespread influence and advanced capabilities. SCRM does not solely manages and fosters customer relationships, however, it also serves as a platform for customer engagement, thereby boosting customer satisfaction and transforming them into loyal customers through various engagement initiatives (Aldaihani *et al*., 2020). CRM indicate a significant role in increasing customer satisfaction, as it positively impacts the satisfaction level. Stronger customer relationships lead to longer-lasting connections and more fruitful long-term outcomes (Iriqat & Daqar, 2017).

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Customer Empowerment

Customer empowerment has gained significant prominence in literature, as it is widely believed that when customers are given power in certain areas, such as service recovery, this leads to favourable consequences, which includes enhanced trust and devotion (Aldaihani & Ali, 2018; Pranic & Roehl, 2012; Wright et al., 2006). The concept of CE involves the strategies or methods adopted by a business to equip customers with the necessary information and decision-making power (Camacho *et al*., 2014). According to (Acar & Puntoni, 2016), described CE as strategies that involve engaging customers and granting them control over and organisation's offerings, which has been known as a shift in decision-making and choice-making power to the customers (Pranic & Roehl, 2012). Customer empowerment is a method employed by businesses to boost the influence of their clients in the marketing process, by collaborating on its development and suggesting improvements as described by (Geyer-Schulz, 2014).

Customers are growing more empowered due to the widespread use of the e-communication, as they become more open to interacting with businesses and other customers (Aldaihani, 2018). The utilization of the social media to empower customers has emerged to a new type of customer, known as social customers (Saarijärvi *et al*., 2013; Almunawar *et al*., 2015). These customers are considered co-creators of value (Constantinides, 2009). Enhancing customer empowerment is more effective when integrated within social media networking contexts (Akhavannasab *et al*., 2018).

One most significant ways to boost social empowerment is through the use of the social vouchers that customers can stake with others (Hanson &

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Yuan, 2018). A key element of CE involves encouraging customers to participate in shaping a company's offerings and services (Ramani & Kumar, 2008). In a study conducted by Almunawar and Anshari (2014), on CE in the electronic health industry, they discovered three types of CE: social, personal, and medical. It is noteworthy that social CRM significantly boosts customer loyalty (Mosadegh & Behboudi, 2011).

Customer Loyalty

In a study by Richins (1983) it was found from 30% to 90% of consumers who experience dissatisfaction would not repurchase the brand, with 34% of them expressing their discontent to friends and family. Despite the study being conducted decades ago, its relevance remains today due to the increased ease and affordability of information dissemination through social media. Al-Hawary *et al*. (2022) assert that loyal customers are deeply committed to a brand, leading to consistent purchases of its products or services. Enhancing customer retention rates can significantly boost profits. The concept of "loyalty" has evolved into a multifaceted notion, no longer solely tied to the end-user, it also entails the entity responsible for delivering the goods or services.

The hotel industry heavily depends on Word-of-mouth recommendations hold great importance in today's digital age, particularly through social CRM, essentially, is an electronic version of oral communication among people. Constructive criticism from clients can negatively impact sales and a brand's reputation (Sigala, 2016). To assess customer loyalty, factors such as repurchase intention, reluctance to switching to suggest other businesses or items and their propensity to endorse another

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organisation's offerings (Aldaihani & Ali, 2019; Lee *et al*., 2001; Aydin & Özer, 2005). A study by Uncles *et al*. (2003) identified three types of CL: loyalty as a mental state (attitudinal commitment), loyalty as an action (repeated purchasing), and loyalty that combines both attitude and behavior, influenced by specific circumstances (customer or purchase situations).

On the other hand, a study by (Greenberg, 2010) distinguished two kinds of CL, which are behavioural and attitudinal. They specified that the loyalty of social customers is attitudinal. In line with this, Prasertchuwong (2018) research determined that a strong connection between customers and a business is influenced by the calibre of their association. According to previous studies, customer loyalty represents a favourable customer behavior towards the company, demonstrated through the intention to repurchase, recommending the products or services to others, remaining a customer, and not switching to competitors, even if they offer better deals.

The Hospitality Industry

According to Hiamey and Hiamey (2020), the hotel industry in Ghana were predominantly owned by families and thus had little or no management structure until the early 2000s. Consequently, services of external providers were not engaged in the sector until the emergence of multinationals into the industry that forced competition and hence specialist firms were engaged. The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) generally categorizes tourism enterprises into accommodation, food and beverages and entertainment. Tourism enterprise refers to transportation, catering, accommodation, and tourist related entities in the hospitality industry.

The hospitality industry comprises several firms performing various tasks which may take the form of entertainment, accommodation houses, food and beverages and transportation (Based & Estimates, 2022; Amissah, Gamor & Deri, 2016). These firms are the core framework of the hospitality industry. The expansion of tourism businesses has significantly increased demand for hotels in the Ghanaian economy. The 2020 Tourism Report by the Ghana Tourism Authority reveals that, 33.7% of the total tourists received came to Ghana for business, followed by a 12.5% who came for visitation and 12.3% for holidays/vacation (Tourism *et al*., n.d.). For a sustainable hospitality industry however, appropriate accounting practice is necessary to provide useful information to management that will help serve customers better and increase profitability.

The hotel business is a significant employment and service sector that significantly contributes to the global economy. The business comprises many service industries such as hotels and food services, and it has been divided into two parts: accommodation and entertainment, which includes clubs and bars. Motels, serviced apartments, hostels, campgrounds, resorts, inns, and public houses serve as lodging options. Restaurants, nightclubs, and fast-food establishments fall into clubs and bars (GTA, 2015). Travel agents and cabin personnel are examples of tourist support commercial operations conducted by the hotel business. The application of technology within the lands of tourism, such as "applied information technology" (IT), and its workforce in the travel and tourism industries are also examples (GTA, 2015).

In 2018, the Ghana Tourism Authority certified and licensed several guest houses, motels and hotels to delivering cuisine, accommodation and

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other tourism enterprises in Ghana. The Registrar General Department is charged with the registration of these tourism enterprises as like other business forms. According to GTA, certified accommodation facilities are broadly categorized as either homestays, hostels, budget, guest houses, star rated, or service apartments based according to hotel size, levels of service, number of rooms, facilities provided, etc. For the food and beverage sector GTA classifies into restaurants, cafeteria, fast foods, coffee/tea shop snack bar, airline/offshore contact catering, and highway rest shops. Conversely, entertainment enterprises are classified as movie houses, pubs, etcetera.

The hospitality sector, which includes hotels and restaurants, has significantly impacted Ghana's economy by contributing approximately 3.9 billion Ghanaian cedis (GHS) to the county's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020, which is roughly 640.9 million US dollars (GDP). This was a significant drop from previous years, probably due to the country's coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. During the period under consideration, a high of about six billion GHS (approximately 985.8 million US dollars) was recorded in 2019, maintaining the upward trend in 2017. In 2021, Ghana's total consumer spending on restaurants and hotels will reach around 2.43 billion dollars.

SCRM Practices and Hotel Industry

A study by Gronroos (2004), points out that the hotel sector must build customer relationships as a result of the distinguishing geographies of service companies' production and consumption. This underscores the significance of the CRM in the hotel industry, given its service-oriented focus, as mentioned by Alt and Reinhold (2012). Factors like growing client anticipations, cost-

conscious clients, increasing customer attainment costs, undefined market circumstances, and declining brand loyalty increase the adoption of CRM as a fruitful hotel practice (Mylonakis, 2009; Wu & Li, 2011; Anshari *et al*., 2019). CRM practices are widely employed in the service industry to boost customer satisfaction and preservation (Buttle, 2009; Pai & Tu, 2011). Consequently, satisfied customers would likely to return and might even refer new customers. According to Kotler (2006) customer satisfaction is the base for customer retention.

Empirical Review

There are several empirical studies carried out to find the relationships among social CRM practices, customer empowerment and customer loyalty. However, there have been conflicting findings. While some studies portray positive effects, others depict negative effects on their relationships. Below are some reviewed empirical studies.

Social CRM Practices on Customer Loyalty

The hotel industry places great importance on customer experience. Social media is considered a vital element of customer interaction and is a crucial element in the success of CRM and customer loyalty. CRM as realised as a crucial organizational technique that aid to boost CL and satisfaction, maintaining long serving relationships between businesses and clients (Herman *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, strategies for managing customer relationships have been extensively utilized in various services sectors to foster long-term customer loyalty (Herman *et al*., 2020).

Consumer loyalty, as presented by Gorondutse and Hilman (2014), is a customer's dedication to a specific service and their association with its

reputation. Also, Mang'unyi, *et al.* (2018) purported that organizations should implement effective customer relationship strategies to boost loyalty and enhance purchasing power. Khan and Fasih (2014) emphasized that loyalty involves repeat purchases and recommending products or services to others. Genuine loyalty, as supported by (Hilman, 2014; Fatma *et al.,* 2015; Mang'unyi *et al.*, 2018), is described by an elevated degree of some of repeated patronage, said by Seddik and Younsi (2020), studied the influence of social CRM practices on loyalty, finding a statistically significant effect.

Customer Knowledge and Customer Loyalty

Effective management of customer knowledge is vital for organizations dealing with gathering, organizing, and sharing information about their customers (Murillo & Annabi, 2002). CKM, or customer knowledge management according to (Lee, Naylor & Chen, 2011), refers to a company's understanding of clients' needs and preferences is crucial for businesses, as it can be categorized into three main aspects: customer information, customer knowledge, and customer-provided knowledge (Khodakarami & Chan, 2014). This comprehension as presented by (Xu & Walton, 2005), leads to insights, profiles, habits, preferred communication methods, and stronger relationships between customers and the organization, that ultimately improving customer delight and loyalty. Customer data forms the foundation of CRM practices, which help with communication, fostering loyalty, customer service, satisfaction, and relationship maintenance across various industries, including hotels (Patwa & Patwa, 2014; Järvinen, 2014; Pillai *et al*., 2015).

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A business cannot effectively prioritize customers without understanding their requirements. For CRM to succeed, customer data must be transformed into valuable insights (Freeland, 2003; Plessis & Boon, 2004). This acquired knowledge can then be utilized by the organization to enhance and broadened its client connections (Zahay & Griffin, 2004). Additionally, knowledge management plays a crucial role in strengthening customer relationships, boosting satisfaction, and fostering loyalty (Sin *et al*., 2005; Yim *et al*., 2005; Akroush *et al*., 2011).

In a study by Mohammed and Rashid (2012) highlighted that in service-based industries like hotels and restaurants, service delivery arises through relations between service providers and customers at various touchpoints. Consequently, hotel and restaurant managers should prioritize fostering positive customer interactions to enhance customer experiences and knowledge. CRM activities are believed to boost customer empowerment, which in turn increases brand appeal and customer loyalty. Ong, et al. (2018) further emphasized the significance of establishing robust connections with lucrative clients in an intensely competitive hotel sector, which is achieved through effective CRM practices that prime to CL.

In their 2005 study, Xu and Walton propose that CK helps businesses gain insights, customer profiles, habits, preferences, and understanding, which can improve interactions and boost customer satisfaction and loyalty. Data from customer knowledge systems can benefit hotel companies in building trust and commitment with customers. Customer knowledge management processes enhance the speed and efficiency of a company's response to customers, increasing perceived value and reducing customer churn

(Jayachandran, Hewett & Kaufman, 2004). However, utilizing customer information to enhance relationship value seems to be an area needing more development. To test these findings in the hostel sector, a customer sample was assumed for validation.

H1a: Customer knowledge have a positive significant effect on customer loyalty.

Customer Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

In various studies, it has been proven that the level of service quality directly impacts customer loyalty, various studies have been conducted by researchers such as (Cronin *et al*., 2000; Martensen & Grønholdt, 2003; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003), among others. However, Ho and Lee (2007) have also contributed to this field. Some of these studies have found that service quality impacts loyalty indirectly, often through customer satisfaction acting as a mediating factor (Collier & Beinstock, 2006; Cristobal et al. 2007; Ladhari, 2009). Darmansyah Iksan (2008) identified a significant positive correlation amongst service quality and customer loyalty, as well as a substantial connection between customer service quality and CL. Moreover, Feliks et al. (2013) emphasized the increase in CL due to good customer service quality.

Learning on, Kotler and Keller (2006) high-quality service are determined by the customer's perception, not the service provider's perspective. Study has consistently revealed that there is a strong correlation amid service quality and customer loyalty, as demonstrated by studies conducted by Al-Rousan and Mohamed (2010), Akbar *et al*. (2010), Malik *et al*. (2012), Bostanji (2013), and Poku *et al*. (2013). In an effort to understand

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the precise relationship between these variables, a hypothesis was formulated and tested using a sample of customers from the hostel sector:

H1b: Customer service quality has a positively significant effect on customer loyalty.

Integrated Marketing Channels on Customer Loyalty

In a study by Yuniaris (2011) it was found that when multiple marketing channels are combined, they have a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty. This conclusion is supported by the work of (Mabkhot *et al*., 2017) that emphasized the positive relation of integrated marketing channels on brand image and loyalty. For CRM initiatives to succeed, the appropriate use of technology is essential, as mentioned by Dutu and Halmajan (2011). As a result, the hospitality industry must effectively utilize technology to manage customer data.

Consequently, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technology aids organizations in reconnecting with past customers and enhancing their profitability by utilizing customer databases and other data storage systems (Robert *et al*., 2005). These systems offer crucial customer information that can assist hotel management in attaining their objectives and boosting hotel efficiency. The importance of IT support for the usefulness of CRM schemes is highlighted.

In addition to this, the utilization of digital medium in marketing offers the most significant opportunity within the hospitality industry, as it is crucial to obtain accurate information from relevant sources at appropriate times to make informed decisions more effectively (Dev & Olsen, 2000). In alignment with this perspective, Kasim and Minai (2009) asserted that the CRM

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technology aspect directly influences hotel performance, as the primary purpose of information technology is to enhance performance. To pinpoint the precise outcomes of the variables using a customer sample across both hostel sectors, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1c: Integrated marketing channels have a positive significant effect on customer loyalty.

Social Media Usage/Online Communities on CL

The phenomenon of SCRM has experienced significant growth in adoption recently, although it remains under-researched in abstract circles (Perez-Vega *et al*., 2022). The increasing importance of social media has brought attention to social CRM in both commercial and academic arenas (Regalado-Peza *et al*., 2022). Clark and Melaco's (2013) study examined the impact of social networking on customer relationship-building and maintenance. Social interacting was utilized as a component of relationship investment, and the study found that it leads to higher levels of relationship investment, better perceptions of relationship quality, and increased customer loyalty.

Once again, Chu and Kim's (2011) research focused on comprehending the behavior of social customers by categorising the factors influencing their decision to engage socially in SCRM practices. Their study concluded that individuals use social networks to experience modern technology. Similarly, Aldaihani and Ali's (2018) investigation aimed to discover the effect of SCRM on customer satisfaction among Islamic bank customers in Kuwait through customer empowerment. The findings demonstrated a positive effect of SCRM

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on CL through CE. Based on these results, the following assumption was developed to evaluate the current study's findings:

H1d: Online communities /use of social media usage have a positively significant effect on customer loyalty.

Value-Added Service and CL

A study by Ab Hamid *et al.* (2011) it is highlighted that customers value a feeling of control and empowerment when they can easily access information about products or services, leading to better decision-making. This concept, known as value-added services, is particularly significant in the Irish hotel sector, as customer experiences play a vital role in the tourism and hospitality industry. The interaction between businesses and customers has evolved, fostering a collaborative approach to value creation. To collaborate with customers and create value in the hotel industry, businesses can utilize various methods, such as guest comment cards, questionnaires, trials, face-to-face discussions, and observing customer reactions (Shaw, Bailey, & Williams, 2011).

In an academic context, social networking sites have gained significance as a way to access crucial hotel customer data act a significant role in the industry as mentioned by (Shaw *et al.*, 2011; Sigala, 2009). The results of collaborative efforts between hotels and their guests can impact numerous aspects of hotel management, including facility improvements, innovative in-room technology, room aesthetics, dining experiences, and online booking platforms (Gartner, 2003) study demonstrates that customers form observations about an organization based on their experiences during interactions. To consistently deliver value, customers should be integrated into

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the CRM process. First, all channels must be integrated, and the fundamentals should be addressed. Effective handling of change and communication is of utmost importance. To support this claim, an example involving customers in the hotel industry was considered, under the following assumption:

H1e: Value-added Services have a positively significant effect on Customer loyalty.

Social CRM Practices on Customer Empowerment

Customer knowledge on customer empowerment

Customer empowerment is a critical concept in the hotel sector, as it enables customers to take a vigorous part in shaping their own experiences. Research has shown that customers who sense empowered are more expected to be satisfied with their stays and return to the hotel (Kim, 2015). However, a study by Lee and Lee (2018) found that customers may not always understand what it means to be empowered, and therefore, may not fully benefit from empowerment initiatives. A study by Ko and Kim (2017) explored customer knowledge of customer empowerment in the hotel sector and found that customers who have a better understanding of empowerment concepts are more likely to engage with empowerment initiatives. Furthermore, customers who have a higher level of perceived control over their experiences are more likely to feel empowered (Kim, 2015). Based on this review, the following assumption was developed to evaluate the current study's findings:

H2a: Customer knowledge have a positive significant effect on customer empowerment.

Customer service quality on Customer empowerment

Conferring from a study by Ngo *et al*. (2019), the relationship between service quality and customer empowerment in the hotel sector was investigated. A survey of 500 hotel guests discovered that service quality has a substantial positive impact on customer empowerment, with high heights of service quality linked to improved customer satisfaction, perceived control, and decision-making autonomy. The results of a study by Yoon and Kim (2018) propose that hotels that prioritize service quality can foster a sense of empowerment among their customers, leading to improved loyalty and constructive word-of-mouth.

Furthermore, the study's outcomes highpoint the importance of staff training and development in delivering high-quality service, as well as the need for hotels to adopt a customer-centric method that emphasizes flexibility and responsiveness. Additionally, Wang *et al*. (2018) examined the relationship between service quality and customer empowerment in the hotel sector, and found that hotels that provided high levels of service quality, such as prompt and courteous service, were more likely to empower customers. Similarly, a study by Lee and Kim (2015) found that hotels that provided personalized service and personalized communication were more likely to empower customers. To ascertain the precise effect of these variables employing a model of customers in the hostel sector, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H2b: Customer service quality has a positively significant effect on customer empowerment.

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Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) on Customer Empowerment

Integrated marketing communication has been identified as a crucial approach for hoteliers to boost CE and CL. IMC involves the coordination of all marketing communication channels to carry a steady and unified message to customers (Kotler, 2000). By implementing IMC, hotels can create a cohesive brand image that resonates with customers and fosters a sense of community (Kotler *et al*., 2013).

Research has shown that IMC can positively affect customer empowerment by providing customers with a sense of control and agency (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For instance, hotels that use social networking space to involve with customers can empower them to share their involvements and provide feedback, which can prime to improved CL (Papacharissi, 2015). Additionally, IMC can support hotels to engrave their marketing messages to individual customers, leading to a more tailored and relevant experience (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Studies have also found that IMC can enhance customer empowerment by granting them with access to information and possessions that help them make well-versed choices (Kumar *et al*., 2018). For example, hotels that offer online booking systems and detailed property descriptions can empower customers to make informed decisions about their stay. To pinpoint the precise outcomes of the variables using a customer sample across both hostel sectors, the succeeding supposition was formulated:

H2c: Integrated marketing channels have a positive significant effect on customer empowerment.

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Online Communities/Social Media Usage on Customer Empowerment

The use of online communities/social media has transformed the way hotels interact with their customers, providing a platform for real-time communication and feedback. Empirical findings have shown that social media usage can significantly empower customers, enabling them to make informed decisions and feel more connected to the hotel brand (Kim *et al*., 2019). Also, the outcome of Al-Shammari *et al*. (2018) revealed that customers who used social media to engage with hotels reported higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Social media has also enabled hotels to provide personalized services and tailor-made experiences to their customers, further empowering them (Kotler et al., 2010). For example, hotels can use social media to offer special promotions and discounts to their followers, making them feel valued and appreciated (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, the use of social media also presents some challenges for hotels, such as managing negative feedback and maintaining a consistent online presence (Gao *et al*., 2018). Despite these challenges, the benefits of social media usage in empowering customers are clear, and hotels that fail to adopt social media may risk being left behind. Based on these results, the following assumption was developed to evaluate the current study's findings:

H2d: Online communities /use of social media usage have a positively significant effect on customer empowerment.

Value-Added Service on Customer Empowerment

Value-added services (VAS) have been increasingly adopted by hotels to differentiate themselves and enhance customer satisfaction. One of the key

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benefits of VAS is customer empowerment, which refers to the process of empowering customers to take switch of their experience and make well-versed decisions (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2009). Studies has shown that hotels that offer VAS, such as personalized concierge services, loyalty programs, and early check-in/check-out options, can significantly increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Gale, 2018).

Previous studies have found that VAS led to increased customer engagement and empowerment, particularly among younger generations (Wong & Bernhard, 2019). For example, a study by Harter (2017) found that hotels that offered VAS such as personalized room recommendations and in-room entertainment options were more likely to increase customer pleasure and loyalty. Similarly, a study by (Lee & Kim, 2018) found that hotels that offered VAS such as spa services and fitness centres were more likely to upsurge customer satisfaction and loyalty. To support this claim the study considered, under the following assumption:

H2e: Value-added Services have a positively significant effect on Customer empowerment.

Customer Empowerment on Customer Loyalty

The concept of CE refers to a company's approach aimed at increasing client dominance in the marketing procedure via collaborative design and recommendations (Geyer-Schulz, 2014). Empowering customers involves providing them with opportunities to participate and submit their own suggestions, which can enhance customer loyalty. In study by Rishika *et al.* (2013) noted that when customers engross with a business through social media, they incline to visit the company more often. Additionally, Castillo

(2017) highlighted that customer empowerment and fulfilment are key aspects for businesses, especially in the hotel industry, to enhance cost-effectiveness and strengthen customer loyalty.

Additionally, (Singh *et al*., 2013) revealed a strong connection between customer empowerment and satisfaction, leading to enhanced customer loyalty. According to Harrigan and Choudhury (2010) as cited in Paliouras and Siakas (2017) adopting social CRM can reflect in beneficial results such as improved brand loyalty, customer trust, and customer empowerment noted that when customers involve with a company through social media, they incline to visit the company more often. A study conducted by Choi and Kim in 2004 discovered that social interaction through social media has an indirect impact on CL. Bhat and Darzi's (2016) research also showed that CE part a substantial role in enhancing CL.

Moreso, Fuchs and Schreier (2011) emphasised the relevance of CE in shaping customer behavioral intentions. Numerous findings, such as those by (Al-Hawary et al., 2011, 2017), Aldaihani and Ali (2018) and Alolayyan *et al*. (2018) identified customer satisfaction as a crucial factor contributing to CL. Positive interactions between companies and their customers can match to better customer experience and loyalty, thereby boosting the profitability of businesses in the hospitality industry, as suggested by Niininen *et al*. (2007). To validate these findings by means of a model of customers in the hostel sector, a supposition was made that these relationships hold true for this specific customer group.

H3: Customer empowerment has a positive and significant effect on Customer loyalty.

SCRM Practices on Customer Loyalty Through Customer Empowerment

CRM, as a crucial theoretical concept, has been utilized by scholars to theorize customer empowerment and has incorporated the expanded notion of relationship management to recognize and elucidate the impact of customer empowerment on diverse behavioral outcomes, such as credence, loyalty, emotive aspects, satisfaction, and sentimental declaration are crucial factors in customer empowerment, which allows individuals to become effective and take control. CE act as a vital role in connection amid SCRM and CL. The core of CE relies on the information customers possess. According to Bell and Eisingerich (2007), it involves aiding customers in maximizing their benefits from the goods and they obtain and serving them resolve any problems they encounter.

Marolt and Zimmermann (2015) question whether customer empowerment serves as a mediator in linking SCRM and CL. To answer this, we must examine the nature of the connections between SCRM, customer empowerment, as well as CE and CE. Initially, Harrigan and Choudhury (2010) demonstrated in their model that adopting SCRM results in constructive consequences, such as enhancing customer loyalty, trust, and empowerment.

Furthermore, as stated by Faase *et al*. (2011) the primary objective of CRM is to acquire, examine, and utilize data to boost sales and cater to customers' requirements. It is evident that there is an interplay between Social CRM and CE on one side, contributing to the enhancement of the context of a company's performance, this research sought to observe the stance of customer empowerment as a mediator between SCRM and CL. Here, CE is viewed as a

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process. Dutot (2013) defines SCRM as an advanced version of CRM, or CRM 2.0, which is fundamentally built upon customer empowerment. This concept involves equipping customers with the essential aids and aptitudes to efficiently utilize the given information.

Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2013) highlighted that customer empowerment through social media is a vital factor in shaping consumer behavior concerning customer empowerment. This engagement contributes to the SCRM system, which in chance affects CL. Long *et al*. (2013) discovered that customer loyalty is significantly influenced by relationship building, a crucial aspect of CRM. In prior research, it has been established that SCRM has a substantial effect on CL (Khan & Fasih, 2014; Agrawal, 2020). Additionally, studies by (O'cass, 2011; Paliouras, 2017) have explored SCRM's influence on customer empowerment. Furthermore, the association amid CE and CL has been investigated by (Rishika *et al*., 2013; Singh *et al*., 2013). To confirm these findings within the context of the hostel sector by analysing a customer sample, the subsequent supposition has been made:

H4:   Customer empowerment mediate the effect of Social CRM on Customer loyalty.

Conceptual Framework

As stated by Carpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage and Young, (2020) a conceptual framework serves as a visual representation and analysis of a study's concepts and their interconnected relationships, which are essential for accomplishing the research's objective. This analytical tool helps to identify cause-and-effect connections within a study's context. Consequently, the

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current study's conceptual framework, depicted in Figure 1, is derived from the mentioned literature and hypotheses.
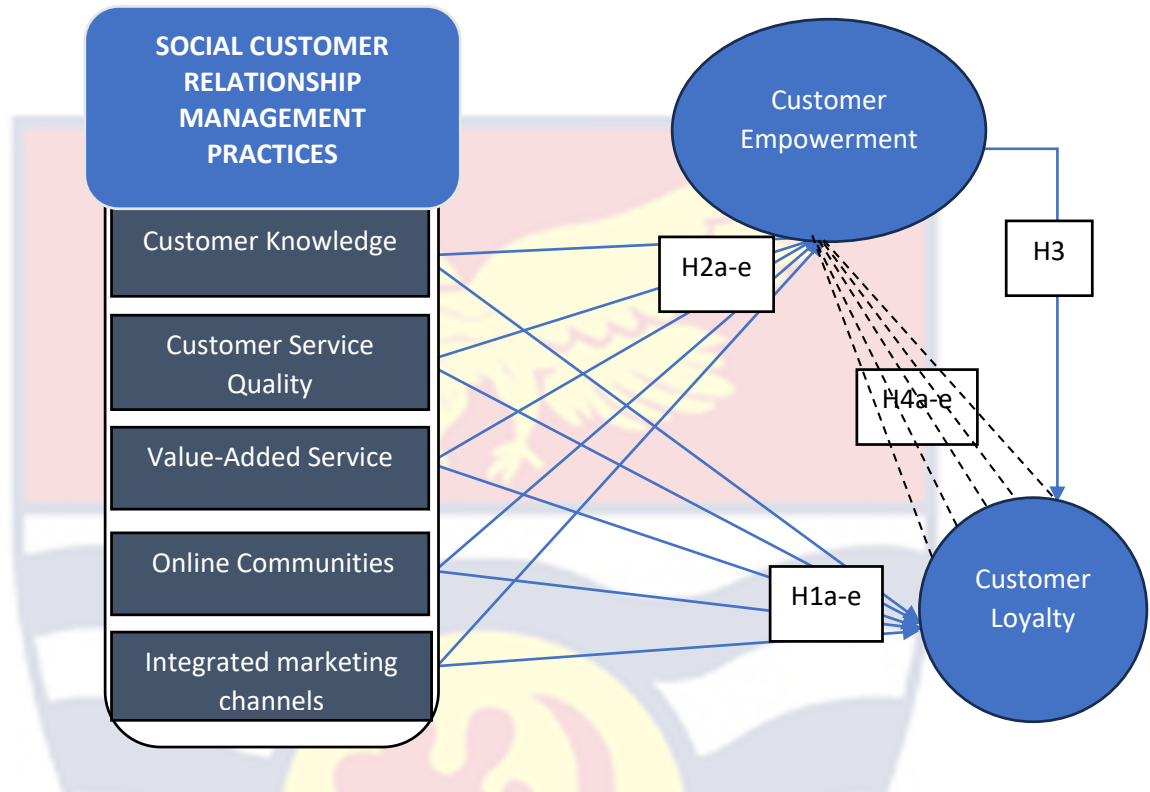
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's Construct (2024)

It is crucial to acknowledge that the format of empowerment and communication can vary among different hotel providers. Nonetheless, constructed on the available literature, we can identify three dimensions through which customers can be empowered in the hotel industry via social CRM practices. Hotel organisations enable their clienteles via personal (Guests interacting with the system), social (Interactions between guests), and hotel empowerment (guests interacting with the provider through customer empowerment) aspects.

The model illustrates that the independent factor, SCRM practices, is believed to have a substantial influence on the dependent variable, and

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customer empowerment, which acts as a mediating variable. It is suggested that customer empowerment holds a substantial influence in mediating the significant effect of social CRM practices on CL.

Chapter Summary

In the given chapter, the research investigates the fundamental theories that serve as the basis for this research, namely Marketing Relationship Theory and Empowerment Theory. The chapter proceeds to make available a thorough examination of present empirical works, discussing topics such as the factors shaping social CRM practices, the effect of CE on CL, the effect between social CRM practices and CE, and the diverse dimensions of social CRM in relation to CL through CE. Furthermore, the theoretical framework, represented in Figure 1, demonstrates the interconnectedness of the study's variables.
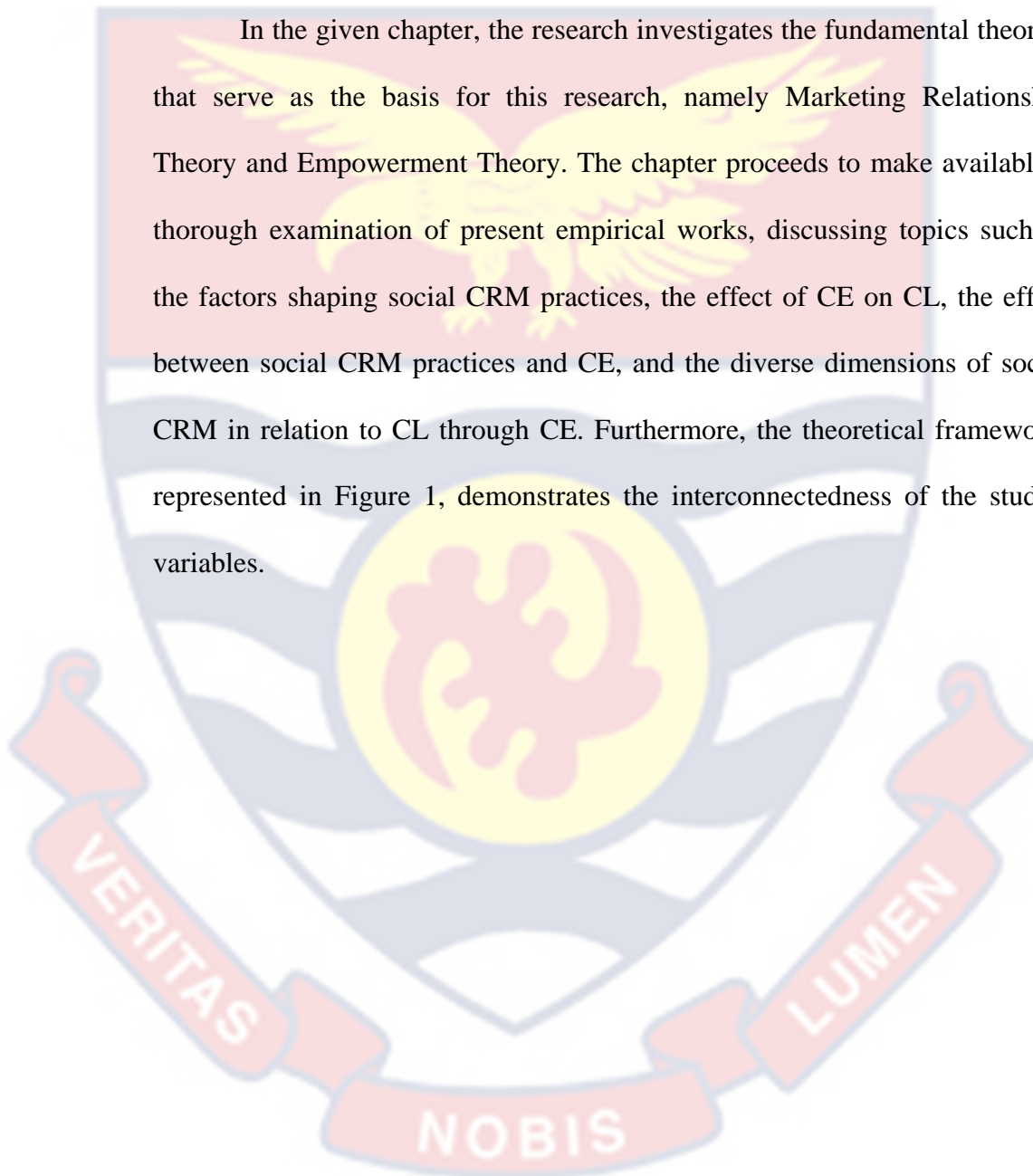
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The main objective of this research is to investigate how incorporating social CRM practices can influence CL through CE in Ghana. This study chapter concentrates on explaining the methodology and the step-by-step procedures used to analyse the effect of social CRM practices and customer loyalty on increasing CL in Ghana. The chapter delves into the research framework, research design, research method, the way variables are obtained and measured, model specifications and reasons, as well as the techniques for data handling and analysis.

Research Approach

The research methodology can be divided into three main categories: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches (Creswell, 2007). In this particular study, the quantitative approach was utilized. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research involves the collection, analysis, and integration of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or multiple studies within an ongoing inquiry program. Combining these approaches can enhance understanding, offer more profound insights, and improve the overall interpretation of results for future investigations.

Quantitative methods were employed to know the level of CL towards a company and to examine the relationship between social CRM practices and CL. The study adopted a quantitative research design, which is generally believed to yield data that is both generalizable and representative (Rutberg &

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Bouikidis, 2018). Quantitative research aims to exploit objectivity, reliability, and generalizations of research findings, often focusing on predictions.

Research Philosophy

A research paradigm encapsulates the philosophical foundations of scientific study and the preferred scientific approach tailored to the research objective, framework, and emphasis (Hallebone & Priest, 2007). In wide-ranging, research paradigms can be divided into three major categories: positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory. This study, however, aligns with the positivism research paradigm, which is constructed on the notion that scientific information can only be attained through empirical observation and quantifiable extent.

Positivists strive to develop theories using objective data and aim to identify cause-and-effect relationships. They often employ explanatory methods and statistical analysis to test hypotheses. While positivism is effective for studying natural phenomena with clear cause-and-effect relationships, it might not fully capture the complexity of human experiences and behaviours in social sciences, as social phenomena are frequently more intricate and context-dependent.

In view of that, the positivism research paradigm was selected for this study since it focuses on gathering data about social CRM practices, CE, and CL in Ghana. This involves collecting information, analysing it using statistical tests to determine significance, and ultimately accepting or rejecting hypotheses to ascertain if social CRM, CE influence CL in the country.

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Research Design

In the context of research, as per Pandey (2021) a research design refers to the overall approach taken to gather evidence and support the research hypothesis. Grey (2014) explains that it outlines the methods for data collection, analysis, and answering research questions and hypotheses. There are three main types of research designs: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive (Saunders *et al*., 2012). To gain a profound thought of the effect of SCRM practices, CE, and CL in Ghana's hotel sector, which lacks comprehensive information, an explanatory research design was chosen to offer a more in-depth description of the effect of these practices.

The researcher utilized explanatory research design in conducting this study. The explanatory research design was used to explain the hotels profile of the customers, the customers basic information, and their respective degrees. Considerably, the researcher utilized explanatory research design to enlighten the significant effect of the social CRM practices, CE, on CL in the Ghanaian hotel sector. This is constructed on how the study's objectives and hypothesis were established.

Study Area

A study area is described by (Weng & Chen, 2018) as the specific geographical location, subject, or field of interest that a researcher focuses on while conducting their investigation. Weng and Chen further posited that study area is the designated region or domain within which the researcher collects data, analyses information, and draws conclusions to address a particular research question or hypothesis. The Central Region of Ghana was selected for this study on the foundation that it's one of the 16 administrative

regions in the country, located along the southern coast of Ghana. It covers an area of approximately 11,580 square kilometres and has a population of around 2.3 million people, according to the 2021 population estimate.

The Central Region is known for its agricultural production, with key crops including cocoa, palm oil, rubber, and coconut. Fishing is also a significant economic activity, as the region has access to the Gulf of Guinea. The region is home to various foreigners and ethnic groups, with the Akan people being the most predominant. Some notable towns and cities in the Central Region include Cape Coast, Winneba, Mankessim, Agona Swedru, and Awutu Breku. The region is well-connected through road networks and had a railway line connecting Accra to the western part of the country.

In summary, the Central Region of Ghana is a diverse and economically vital area, known for its rich cultural heritage, agricultural production, and coastal beauty. However, the available Guests of all the 197 licenced hotel firms in the Central Region of Ghana was used as the focus of the study. According to TripAdvisor as at 2022 there were 115 licensed hotels in the region. A survey by Myjoyonline as at January, (2022) concluded that over 180,000 foreigners visit the region.

Study Population

As per Kothari (2004), population is an entire civilization with similar quantitative characteristics of individuals, events, or objects. The totality of causes that meet predetermined criteria is referred to as population (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Moreso, from to the 2021 population estimate, the Central Region had a population of around 2.3 million, approximately 38.2% of the central regional population were under 15 years

old, 59.6% fell between 15 and 64 years, and the remaining 2.2% were 65 years or older. However, it was generally assumed that there was a comparatively different ratio of males and females in the region's population.

The Central Region of Ghana was selected for this study on the basis that it's one of the 16 administrative regions in the country, located along the southern coast of Ghana. It covers an area of approximately 11,580 square kilometres and has a population of around 2.3 million people, according to the 2021 population estimate. Due to the nature of the research and the unit of analysis that was employed for the survey, citing from the (Ghana Hotel Association 2022) there are 360 licenced operating hotels in the Central Region. The breakdown includes 1-star hotel 154, 2-star hotel 74, 3-star hotel 117, 4-star hotel 15, and 5-star hotel 0. Specifically, the study considered customers (guest) who have spent continuously more than 3 nights in 3- and 4-star hotels for a period of 5yrs in the Central region of Ghana.

However, 3- and 4-star hotels were chosen for the study on the argument made by (Dewnarain, 2018; Alanazi, 2023; Mokhtar *et al.*, 2019) which states that 1 star and 2-star hostels lacks the technical capacity, technological skills to incorporate social customer relationship management practices in managing customers. Ideally, the accessible population were not entirely the true representative of the target population in relations of demographic information such as age, sex, and education. However, due to limitations in data collection methods, it was not possible to include every member of the target population in the accessible population. This led to inaccuracies in representing the target population's characteristics.

However, not all individuals in the accessible population participated in the data collection activities, either due to unwillingness, inability, or lack of awareness. This non-participation led to a skewed illustration of the target population, as the accessible population may not accurately reflect the demographics and other characteristics of the entire region. Inclusively, customers of all sampled 3 star and 4 star rated licensed operating hotels in the cape coast metropolis were considered. Hotel customers were included in the study due to the standard service that was rendered at the hotel firms.

However, customers (guest) who have spent continuously more than 3 nights in 3- and 4-star hotels for a period of 5yrs in the Central region of Ghana were included in the study. Exclusively, 1-star, 2-star, guesthouse and budgeted hotel were excluded from the study for consistency. Again, customers who spent a night or two and has not visited the hotel for the past 5years were not considered. Certainly, customers of 1-star, 2-star, guesthouse and budgeted hotels were excluded from the study due to the standard of operation and the services that is been carried out at aforementioned hotels as compared to the standard hotels.

Sampling Procedures

Sampling refers to the course of choosing a specific number of items from a defined study population (Phrasisombath, 2009). The two main types of sampling techniques include: probability sampling and non-probability sampling, as mentioned by Pallant (2005) the optimum sample size representing an unknown population size was determined by a model; the sample size should be greater than 50 plus 8 by the number of predators using a confidence interval of 96%. Taken Pallant (2005) model into consideration,

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the predators for the study were 40 which in this case the sample scope of the study was 370 of hotel guest from the 360 licensed hotel firms in the central region of Ghana.

In this study, convenience sampling was initially used to obtain the appropriate sample of the 3-star and the 4-star hotels. However, this was due to certain limitations like work schedules and distance, convenience sampling was then employed to select easily accessible hotels in the central region of Ghana. This method gained popularity during the pandemic and helped target hard-to-reach populations (Güzel *et al*., 2020). The researcher could not approach all customers at the hotel, so this approach was implemented as a solution.

In order to execute a thorough survey with ease, and considering the accessibility of the study participants at any given time and the proximity of their geographical locations, the researchers opted for convenience sampling purposive sampling. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to specifically select the customers (guest) who have spent continuously more than 3 nights in the 3- and 4-star hotels for a period of 5yrs.

Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaire, according to Dillman (2014) was described as structured set of questions designed to collect data from a specific population or sample. It was again asserted that questionnaires have widely been used as a research instrument in several grounds such as social sciences, marketing, healthcare, and education to gather information from respondents through written, oral, or online means. The data composed from a questionnaire can be both quantitative and qualitative, depending on the type of hypothesis.

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Questionnaires help provide a standardized format for data collection, ensuring that respondents were questioned on the same questions in the similar way. This allows for consistent and comparable responses across participants (Dillman, 2014). Compared to other research methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, DeVellis (2016) presented that questionnaires are more cost-effective, particularly when administered online or through self-completion methods. This was because they require less time and resources for data collection and analysis (DeVellis, 2016).

Specifically, questionnaire was adopted to gather data for the research. The questionnaire incorporated measurement for SCRM practices, customer loyalty, and customer empowerment aspects, which were adapted and updated from previous studies (Fullerton, 2005; Kim *et al*., 2012; Al-Shibly *et al*., 2004; Hamid *et al*., 2020; So, King & Sparks, 2014; Saarijärvi & Kuusela, 2013; Cherapanukorn, 2017; Schweitzer & Simon, 2021). To maintain the questionnaire's validity and reliability, the instrument underwent a thorough review, screening, and adaptation process, ensuring it aligns with the study's objectives.

In the study, hotels that have been in operation for over five years were selected as the accessible population for analysis. The study comprised of two main sections. The first part collected demographic data about hotel guests (such as gender, age, education, occupation, monthly income, and the reason for choosing that particular hotel brand). The second part included 40 questions on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 for "Strongly Disagree" to 5 for "Strongly Agree") to determine how the hotel utilizes social customer

relationship management (Social CRM) practices through online communities to assess customer empowerment and loyalty.

Again, the 40 elements were classified into seven (7) categories: customer knowledge (5 items), customer service quality (6 items), integrated marketing channels (5 items), online communities/use of social media (6 items), value-added service (6 items), customer empowerment (6 items), and customer loyalty (6 items). Customer loyalty has been assessed through evaluating customers' inclination to repurchase from the same company, their reluctance to switch to other superior alternatives, and their eagerness to suggest the business's products (Lee *et al.*, 2007; Aydin & Özer, 2005; Aldaihani & Ali, 2020).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process is a structured and organized method to obtain pertinent information for a particular research query or goal. In this case, an authorization note was acquired from the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management at UCC and incorporated into the questionnaire, which was then presented to hotel managers. The introductory letter assisted the researcher to gain permission from the managers and the guests at the hotels. Data was collected from standardized questionnaires such that all respondents received the same questions. The field work was conducted by four trained field workers after three days training, which lasted for a period of one month, which started after ethical authorisation was attained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast on the 11th December, 2023 to 11th January, 2024.

The consent forms for all the participants were administered by the investigator in person and the four field assistants prior to the administration of the questionnaire to respondents. Again, a preliminary letter from the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management was attached and sent to the Ghana's Tourism and Hospitality Authority for approval a week before data collection seeking the consent of the participants from the hospitality sector in the region. And it was done from 4th December to 8th December, 2023. Respondents were taken through how the questionnaire was expected to be completed and as well as how to respond well to the questions.

The hotel firms received a preliminary letter from the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management at the University of Cape Coast. This strategy was intended to secure formal permission from the various organisations for the study's execution. The questionnaire was administered via the drop-off and pick-up method. Following the initial distribution of questionnaires to respondents in the various hotels, at least twice phone calls per week were made to the respondents to remind them to complete the questionnaires on time.

Data Processing and Analysis

Derry *et al*. (2010), pointed out that data analysis is a process that encompasses various steps, including editing, coding, categorizing, organizing, and visually representing data. Cooper and Schindler (2014) expanded on this, explaining that analysing data typically involves condensing the collected information, creating summaries, identifying patterns, and employing statistical methods. The data was examined using descriptive and experimental analysis. Descriptive analysis was to provide the SCRM

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practices of the firms and their CL whilst experimental research design was used to examine the effect of SCRM practices on CL of the hotel firms. SPSS version 27 was used to perform the data entry.

In this study, they employed three methods for data analysis. Firstly, they reviewed the data for incomplete or invalid information, excluding it from the analysis. Secondly, they coded the data according to various constructs. The social customer relationship management practices were coded using indicators from CK1 to CK5, customer service quality was coded from CSQ1 to CSQ6, integrated marketing channels were coded from IMC1 to IMC5, online communities and social media usage were coded from OC1 to OC6, value-added services were coded from VAS1 to VAS6, customer empowerment was coded from CE1 to CE6, and finally, customer loyalty was coded from CL1 to CL6. Lastly, they carefully checked the coded data to minimize errors in data entry and processing.

In a study utilizing IBM SPSS V.27, researchers conducted a descriptive analysis focusing on the effect of adopting social CRM practices on CL and CE. They examined variables such as gender, age, education, occupation, income, and hotel brand choice. The descriptive results were presented in Tables 8 to 13. To investigate the study's objectives and hypotheses, SmartPLS V.4 was employed for experimental analysis. Meanwhile, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to assess the measurement model concerning social CRM practices, CL and CE.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the authors discuss the approach they took to conduct their study. They followed the positivism research paradigm and utilized a quantitative study method. The experimental design was employed to scrutinise the social CRM practices of hotel businesses. The research aimed to assess the factors influencing social CRM practices, analyse the connection between these practices and CL, and explore the role of CE in this relationship. The population involved all one fifty-three licenced hotel firm's guests in the Cape Coast metropolis through convenience sampling technique, whilst Pallant (2005) model gave three hundred and fifty-four (370) customers for the study. The data was collected mainly from primary data source using structured questionnaires to gather data from the respondent. The figures was scrutinised using descriptive-experimental statistical analysis.
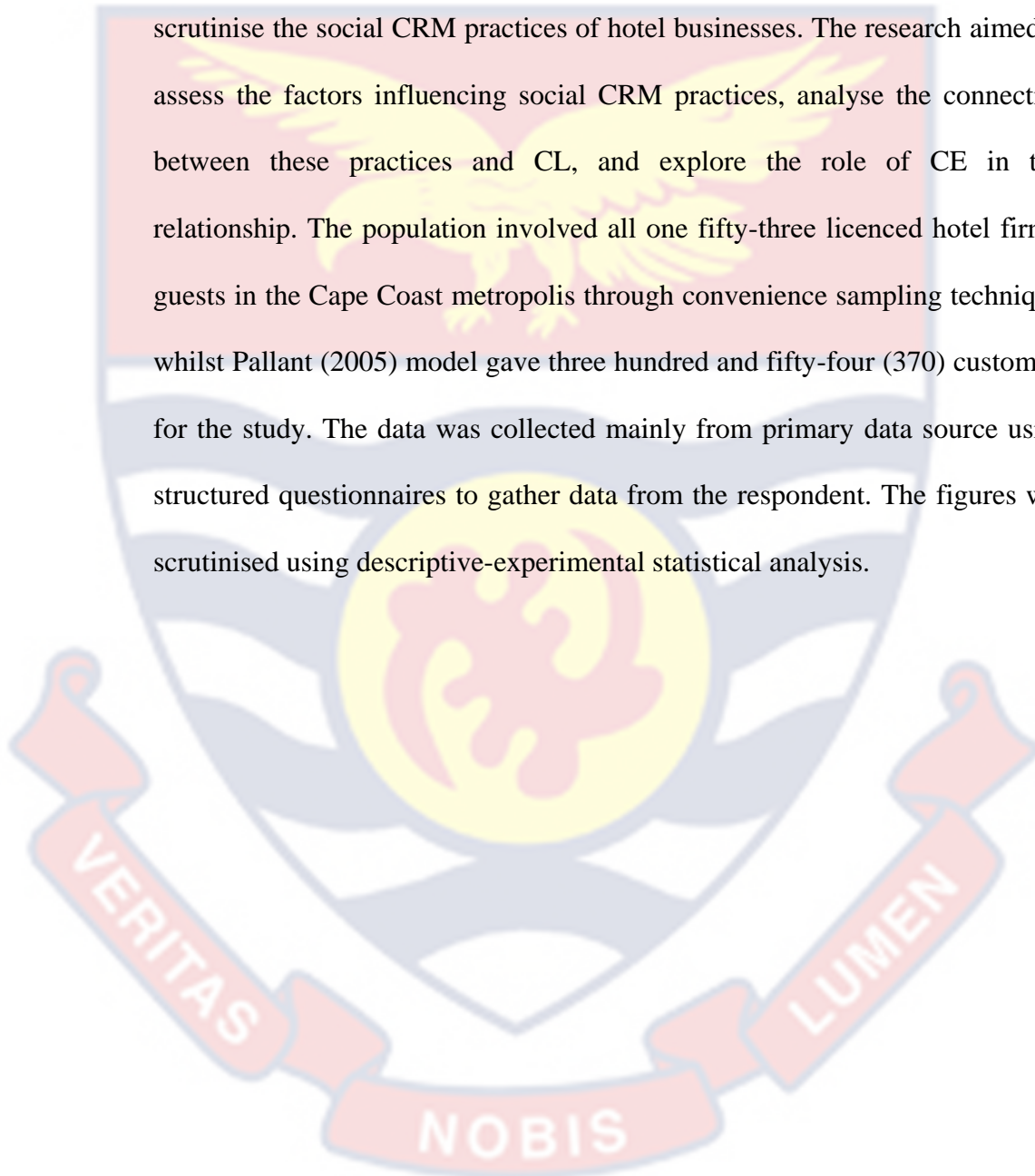
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research aimed to investigate how social customer relationship management strategies influence customer loyalty by empowering customers in Ghana's hotel sector. The study utilized relationship theory and empowerment theory to explain the relationships between the study's variables. This theory provided profound insights into how hotel firms strategically manage their relationships with external entities through social customer relationship management practices. In doing so, the hypotheses stated below were tested in accordance with the study's objectives;

H_{1a-1e}: Social customer relationship management practices have a significant positive effect on CL in the hotel industry.

H_{2a-2e}: Social customer relationship management practices have a substantial positive effect on CE in the hospitality industry.

H_3: Customer empowerment has a significant positive effect on CL in the hotel industry.

H_{4a-e}: Customer empowerment mediate the effect of social CRM practices on CL in the hotel industry.

However, the study adopted the pragmatism philosophy. This philosophy gave way for the research to follow a quantitative approach and explanatory study design. Again, the study followed a model by Pallant (2005) sampling technique to sample 370 respondents. Four research objectives were set with four hypotheses set for the study. More so, the researcher used IBM

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SPSS statistic V27 to prepare the data and employed Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM v4) to analyse the data gathered.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

In this part, we discuss the various aspects of the participants' backgrounds. which was pertinent to the study. Characteristics details of the respondents include the gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, income, and purpose of choosing a particular hotel. The demographic characteristics provides an overview of the study's respondents' characteristics and is projected subsequently in the Table 1.

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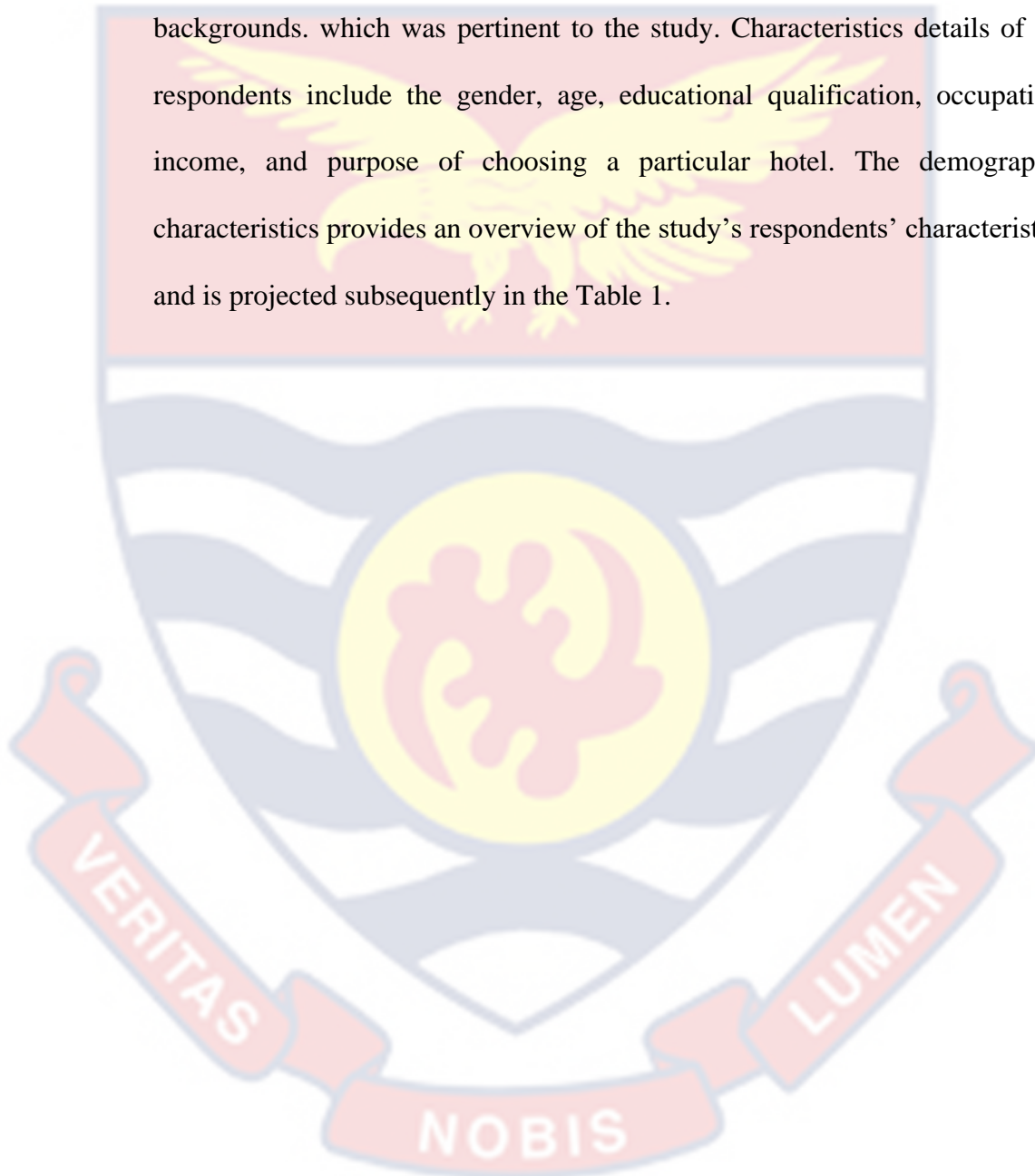
Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic variables/Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender:		
Male	191	52.2
Female	175	47.8
Total	**366**	**100**
Age:		
20-30	93	25.4
31-40	124	33.9
41-50	90	24.6
50+	59	16.1
Total	**366**	**100**
Qualification:		
Secondary	78	21.3
Bachelor's degree	144	39.3
Master's degree	70	19.1
Doctorate degree	49	13.4
Others	25	6.9
Total	**366**	**100**
Occupation:		
Teacher/Lecturer	61	16.7
Nurse/Doctor	64	17.5
Pensioner	39	10.7
Student	75	20.5
Banker	21	5.6
Others	106	29.0
Total	**366**	**100**
Income:		
Less than GHC1000	91	24.9
Less than GHC2000	57	15.6
Less than GHC3000	72	19.7
GHC3000+	146	39.8
Total	**366**	**100**
Purpose of Stay:		
Professional service and hospitality	114	31.1
Comfort and convenient location	179	48.9
Safety and security	30	8.2
Amenities and facilities	43	11.8
Total	**366**	**100**

Source: Field survey (2024)

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Among the respondents who took part in the study, 191 out of the respondents (representing 52.2%) were males and 175 of respondents (representing 47.8%) were females. The dispersal of respondents is obtainable in Table 1. This shows how males dominate in the hotel sector, especially in a developing country context. However, managers should tailor marketing campaigns to appeal to both genders, ensuring that the messaging information and visuals resonate with both male and female customers. This can help in attracting a wider audience and increasing overall customer satisfaction hence customer loyalty.

Also, the data in Table 1 indicate that 93 respondents were aged between 20-30years occupying 25.4%, respondent ranging from 31-40years were 124 amounting to 33.9%, where respondents with the ages ranged 41-50years were0 with 24.6%, whereas respondents aged 50+years with 16.1% were 59 in total. Table 1 reveals the age distribution of the surveyed respondents, which can be crucial for hotel managers to understand their target audience and adapt their services accordingly. The information in Table 1 illustrate that the majority of the respondents fell within the 31-40 years age group, followed by those aged 20-30 years. However, this suggests that the hotel may be particularly popular among young adults and early middle-aged individuals. Hence, Hotel managers can practice this evidence to focus their marketing efforts on appealing to these age groups. This may involve highlighting amenities or experiences that are particularly attractive to these demographics, such as social events, wellness programs, or family-friendly activities.

Again, educational qualification of respondent were tested on the basis of secondary, bachelors, masters, doctorate and other educational qualification, where 78 respondent having 21.3% were recorded to be secondary qualification, 144 (representing 39.3%) were Bachelor's degree, 70 respondents (representing 19.1%) were Master's degree, and 49 respondents (representing 13.4%) were Doctorate degree whiles 25 respondents accumulating 6.9% were from other educational qualification such as HND, Vocational, and JHS. More so, the data in table 1 revealed valuable insights that hotel managers can use to advance their services and cater to the diverse needs of their guests. The breakdown of educational qualifications showcased a relatively educated respondent, with a significant portion holding Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degrees. This suggested that the hotel's target audience may consist of professionals and individuals with higher socioeconomic statuses. However, hotel managers can use this information to segment their guests based on their educational backgrounds.

Moreover, from Table 1, out of the total respondent who contributed in the study, 61 respondent representing 16.7% were teacher/lecturers, 64 representing 17.5% were nurses/doctors, 39 respondent representing 10.7% were pensioners, students were 75 with 20.5%, where respondent who chose banking were 21 representing 5.6%, finally other occupation including pastors, lawyer, police, fire service, farmers, engineer, caterer, fashion designers, chef, artists, musicians, photographers etc, were 106 representing 29.0%. However, the hotel management can practice this evidence to better understand their clientele and tailor their services accordingly. Again, understanding the occupational distribution of the hotel's guests allows the management to create

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targeted marketing strategies, tailor their services, and enhance the overall customer experience. By addressing the specific needs and preferences of each profession, the hotel can attract a diverse clientele and maintain a strong reputation within various industries.

Additionally, income level from Table 1 were tested to know whether income influence the customer's choice of the hotel they opt for. Of the total respondent of the study, 91 respondents representing 24.9% earn less than GHC1000, 57 respondents representing 15.6% earns less than GHC2000, less than GHC3000 earners amounted to 72 respondents with 19.7%, whiles 146 respondents represented 39.8% of the respondents. Notwithstanding, the information from Table 1 on income levels of the hotel's respondents provided valuable insights for hotel managers to improve their services and cater to a wider range of customers.

Also, it was purported that the income data can help hotel managers determine whether their current pricing strategy is suitable for their target audience. From Table 1, its indicated that significant portion of respondents fell within a specific income range, the hotel may need to adjust its pricing to remain competitive and accessible to that customer segment. Hotel managers can however use the income data to develop targeted marketing campaigns and promotions that resonate with guests from different income groups. This may involve creating special offers, loyalty programs, or partnerships with local businesses that provide the needs and preferences of each customer segment.

However, on the basis of respondents' reasons of the choice of hotel, 114 respondents representing 31.1% choose a hotel type for professional

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service and hospitality, 179 respondents with 48.9% opted for comfort and convenient location, safety and security were chosen by 30 respondents representing 8.2% of the total sampled size, whereas 43 respondents with 11.8% selected amenities and facilities as basis to consider the choice of their hotel brand. Again, based on the additional reasons provided by the respondents for choosing a hotel in Table 1, hotel managers can derive several implications to improve their services and attract more guests. It was reported from table 8 that a significant portion of respondents (31.1%) chose a hotel based on professional service and hospitality. So, hotel managers should focus on enhancing the quality of their staff's training and customer service to ensure a positive guest experience. This may involve investing in staff development programs, regular performance evaluations, and fostering a strong company culture that emphasizes guest satisfaction.

Evaluation of the PLS-SEM Results

PLS-SEM is a suitable approach when the study is exploratory or experimental, the model is complex, the constructs/variables are measured formatively and the study aims to predict the constructs (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011). Sarstedt, Hair, Hult and Ringle (2022) posit that reporting the findings of PLS SEM involves two steps. Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle (2019) outline a two-step process for evaluating models: first, specifying the model (either a measurement model or a structural model). According to Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014), there were two models that were used in this study: the measurement model and the structural model. The former was used to evaluate the effect amid the constructs and their

corresponding indicators, while the latter depicts the relationship among the constructs.

Model Specification

This part of the text discusses the structural models and measuring systems. The measurement model, also known as the outer model, illustrates the relationship between the constructions and the accompanying indicators. Furthermore, the constructs are explained through the structural model (Hair *et al*., 2020). Describing the relationship amid the constructs and their indicators in a measurement model is crucial, whereas the structural model focuses on explaining the impact among these components' specification was concerned with describing or depicting the relationship amid the constructs (Acquah, 2020). The measurement and structural model are represented in Figure 2.

Model Assessment

The second step in analysing results with PLS-SEM was to evaluate the measurement and structural models respectively (Hair, Howard & Nitzl, 2020). It involved analysing results to gauge the reliability and validity of the accounts of the construct in the outer model. Doing so helped to ascertain the trustworthiness of the outer model as well as formulate the base for assessing the inner model. Assessing the inner model is concerned with examining the hypothesised effect that existed in the inner model which also formed the bases for the research (Hair *et al*., 2019).

Measurement Model Assessment

The research evaluated the model's accuracy by focusing on reliability and validity (Hair *et al*., 2020). Reliability was assessed through construct reliability and internal consistency, which were determined by examining

indicator loadings and Cronbach's alpha (α) as well as the composite reliability of the construct. Convergent validity was determined by factor loadings and the average variance extracted (AVE) of the items. Discriminant validity was measured using cross-loadings, HTMT ratio criteria, and Fornell-Larcker (Hair *et al*., 2019).

Measurement Model Specification

The measurement model referred to the indicator items that were adopted to measure the constructs. This model used forty (40) indicators to

Figure 2: Measurement and structural model results
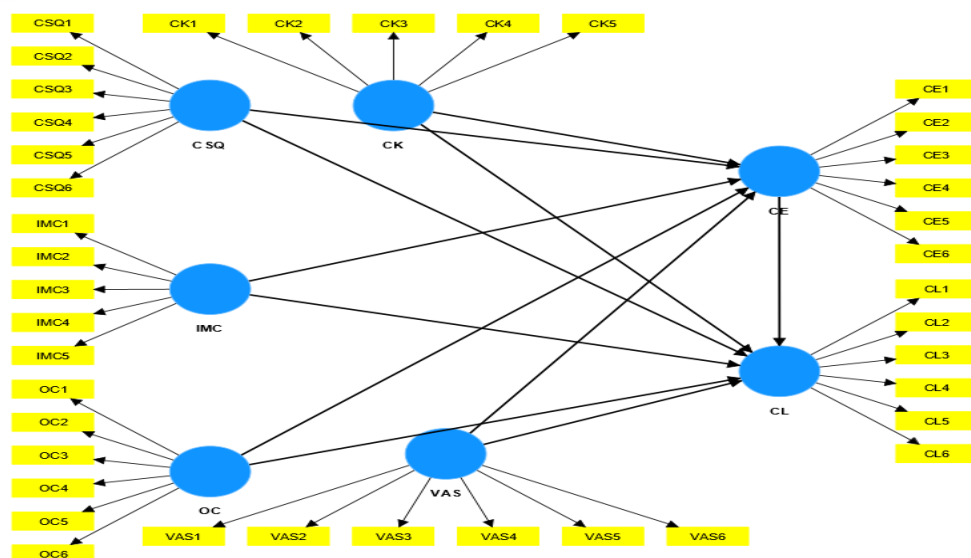
Source: Author's construct (2024)

measure 7 constructs as shown in Figure 2.

The items used to describe each construct are described subsequently. The exogenous variable was social customer relationship management practices while the endogenous variable was CL, whereas CE was tested as the mediating variable.

Social Customer Relationship Management practices were measured using (5) composite variables, where each composite variable contains specific

indicator items. They were represented by CK (CK1, CK2, CK3, CK4, CK5), CSQ (CSQ1, CSQ2, CSQ3, CSQ4, CSQ5, CSQ6), VAS (VAS1, VAS2, VAS3, VAS4, VAS5, VAS6), OC (OC1, OC2, OC3, OC4, OC5, OC6), and IMC (IMC1, IMC2, IMC3, IMC4, IMC5). Customer Loyalty was measured with 6 indicators namely CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, and CL6. Whereas Customer Empowerment was also measured with 6 items consisting CE1, CE2, CE3, CE4, CE5, and CE6.

Structural model specification

The study's inner model, also known as the structural model, comprises one exogenous construct, one mediating variable, and one endogenous construct. The constructs for this study were represented with blue circles as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Structural and measurement model results
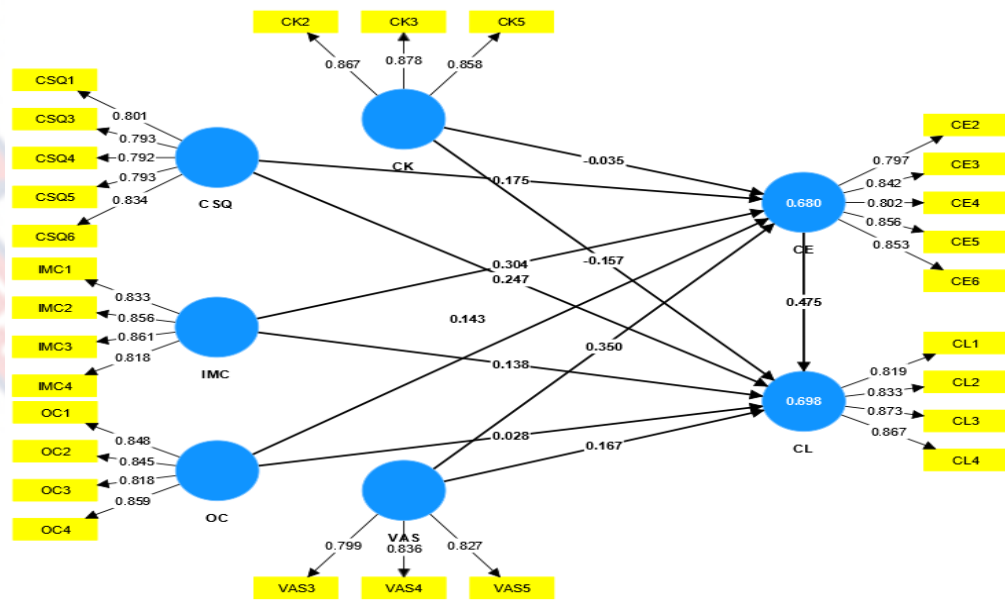
Source: Author's construct (2024)

The endogenous construct in this study was customer loyalty. The exogenous construct was social customer relationship management practices and it was connected to the endogenous variable through the mediating

variable customer empowerment theoretically using the theory of relationship marketing, and empowerment theory.

Assessing Construct Reliability

Reliability describes the robust nature of the questionnaire and whether the items would yield similar results when used in different situations on different sets of samples and administration means (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Construct reliability was examined using indicator loadings, which ought to be above 0.708 for the item to be said to be reliable (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Hair *et al.* (2019) posited that loadings above the stated threshold imply that the construct elucidates more than 50% of the variation in the indicator. The analysis requires that items that do not load 0.708 and above be deleted from the model. This led to the deletion of some of the indicators since their presence affected the composite reliability and AVE values. The results in Figure 3 show that the remaining indicators are reliable in explaining the constructs since they are all above 0.708.

Assessing Internal Consistency Reliability

The outcomes of the internal consistency assessment are obtained in Table 2.

Table 2: Internal Construct Reliability and Validity Assessment

Items	Cronbach's alpha	(Rho_A)	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Customer Empowerment	0.888	0.892	0.917	0.690
Customer Knowledge	0.836	0.837	0.901	0.753
Customer Loyalty	0.870	0.870	0.911	0.720
Customer Service Quality	0.862	0.864	0.901	0.644
Integrated Marketing Channel	0.863	0.865	0.907	0.709
Online Communities	0.864	0.865	0.907	0.710
Value-Added Service	0.757	0.757	0.861	0.673

Source: Field survey (2024)

Internal consistency reliability assessed how congruous and consonant responses were across some subsets of the questions (Saunders *et al*., 2009). Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values (Haire *et al*., 2019). Threshold values for both measures ought to be 0.7 and above for a model to be said to possess internal consistency reliability (Afthanorhan, 2013). Cronbach's α depicted the lower bound of internal consistency reliability while composite reliability presents the upper bound of internal consistency reliability (Acquah, 2020). This meant that Cronbach's α was a less exact degree of reliability while composite reliability was also a more robust a higher predictor of reliability (Hair *et al*., 2019).

However, a more exact measure within the two extremes was presented as Rho A, and this produces a good compromise for a model if one

was faced with outlying results in terms of Cronbach's α and composite reliability. The values in the table met the stated threshold (above 0.7), hence the model was said to have internal consistency reliability.

Assessing Convergent Validity

The validity of a concept was explained as the rate at which the questions or items measure the questions for which they were intended and enabled researchers to make generalisations of a given set of enquiries in terms of a construct (Saunders *et al*., 2009). Convergent validity described the ability of a given set of questions to come together or correlate to measure the construct (Hair *et al*., 2014). The standard used to measure convergent validity was the AVE with a threshold of 0.5 and above as well as factor loadings of 0.7 and above (Hair *et al*., 2019). An AVE above 0.5 meant that the construct explained more than 50% of the variance in its indicators (Afthanorhan, 2013). The AVE values and factor loadings presented were presented in subsequent sections for the various variables. Some of the indicators were deleted from the model because their loadings on the respective constructs were below 0.7, and their presence affected the AVE.

Social Customer Relationship Management Practices (SCRM Practices):

Social CRM practices was measured with 19 indicators from (5) construct. Though some of the indicators were below the assessment of quality criteria, however there was no deletion of those indicators since their presence did not affect the AVE. The AVEs and factor loadings of the items are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3: Convergent Validity for Social Customer Relationship Management practices

Construct	Indicators	Factor loadings	AVE
CK	CK2	0.867	0.753
	CK3	0.878	
	CK5	0.858	
CSQ	CSQ1	0.801	0.644
	CSQ3	0.793	
	CSQ4	0.792	
	CSQ5	0.793	
	CSQ6	0.834	
IMC	IMC1	0.833	0.709
	IMC2	0.856	
	IMC3	0.861	
	IMC4	0.818	
OC	OC1	0.848	0.710
	OC2	0.845	
	OC3	0.818	
	OC4	0.859	
VAS	VAS3	0.799	0.673
	VAS4	0.836	
	VAS5	0.827	
CL	CL1	0.819	0.720
	CL2	0.833	
	CL3	0.873	
	CL4	0.867	
CE	CE2	0.797	0.690
	CE3	0.842	
	CE4	0.802	
	CE5	0.856	
	CE6	0.853	

Source: Field survey (2024)

The indicators for the final model have factor loadings above 0.7, ranging from 0.858 to 0.878 for Customer Knowledge (CK), 0.792 to 0.834 ranging for Customer service quality (CSQ), also Integrated marketing communication had factor loadings from 0.818 to 0.861, where Online communities and Value-added service had 0.818 to 0.859 and 0.799 to 0.836 respectively. Contrary, items CK1, CK4, CSQ2, IMC5, OC5, OC6, and VAS1, VAS2, VAS6 were deleted because their presence did affect the AVE, moreover, the AVE value was above 0.5. Therefore, there was convergent validity for the indicators on the construct.

Customer Loyalty (CL): Customer loyalty was measured with 6 items and two (CL5 and CL6) item was deleted because its presence affected the AVE. Convergent validity outcomes are shown in Table 3. The items for CL, as revealed in Table 3, revealed that there was the satisfaction of convergent cogency. Factor loadings ranged between 0.819 to 0.867 which is higher than 0.7, and AVE of 0.720 which was above 0.5 though an item CL5 and CL6 were deleted because their presence affected the AVE.

Customer empowerment (CE): Customer empowerment was measured with 6 items and one (CE1) item was deleted because its presence affected the AVE. Convergent validity outcomes are revealed in Table 3. The AVE of Customer empowerment was 0.690 (above the threshold of 0.5) with factor loadings ranging from 0.797 to 0.856 but the assessment of quality criteria led to the deletion of one item (CE1). However, AVEs and factor loads of the remaining indicators are presented in Table 3. Hence, it was determined that there was convergent validity.

Assessing Multi-Collinearity

The assessment of multi-collinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Multi-Collinearity Assessment

Variable	Collinearity statistics Tolerance	VIF
CE -> CL	0.320	3.127
CK -> CE	0.358	2.790
CK -> CL	0.357	2.794
CSQ -> CE	0.403	2.479
CSQ -> CL	0.388	2.575
IMC -> CE	0.310	3.225
IMC -> CL	0.284	3.515
OC -> CE	0.349	3.869
OC -> CL	0.341	2.933
VAS -> CE	0.457	2.187
VAS -> CL	0.389	2.571

Source: Field survey (2024)

Multicollinearity was used to describe a data problem that aroused due to the linear relationship that existed among variables (Alin, 2010). It led to reliability issues and model estimation problems. The variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values were used to assess collinearity issues, and VIF values ought to be less than 3 even though values that were higher but less than 5 were also acceptable (Hair *et al*., 2019).

Moreover, Hair *et al*. (2019) tolerance (1÷VIF) values were also expected to be above 0.2 to be conclusive proof of the absence of multi-collinearity. Results in Table 4 showed that there was no multi-collinearity issue since the values met the stated criteria. The VIF values in Table 4 also showed no issue of common method bias since the values were below 5 (Kock, 2015).

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Assessing Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity described the extent of empirical distinctiveness of constructs; that is situations where constructs measure what they are intended to measure (Hair *et al*., 2020). The Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT (heterorait-monotrait), and cross-loadings were used to measure discriminant validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The outcomes for the Fornell-Larcker criterion are presented in Table 5. Whiles HTMT (heterorait-monotrait) are shown in Table 5.

Table 5:Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

	CE	CK	CL	CSQ	IMC	OC	VAS
CE	0.830						
CK	0.610	0.868					
CL	0.794	0.511	0.848				
CSQ	0.688	0.648	0.698	0.803			
IMC	0.748	0.706	0.694	0.722	0.842		
OC	0.659	0.750	0.573	0.591	0.728	0.842	
VAS	0.740	0.596	0.698	0.658	0.678	0.619	0.821

Source: Field survey (2024)

The Fornell-Larcker criterion posited that a concept and its indicators ought to share more variance as compared to the construct and other indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The rule of thumb here was the square root of the AVE of each of the constructs must be higher than the squared inter-construct correlation (Hair *et al*., 2019)

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Table 6: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Criterion for Discriminant

	CE	CK	CL	CSQ	IMC	OC	VAS
CE							
CK	0.706						
CL	0.897	0.598					
CSQ	0.781	0.763	0.803				
IMC	0.849	0.830	0.801	0.834			
OC	0.745	0.883	0.659	0.680	0.843		
VAS	0.899	0.748	0.860	0.812	0.837	0.763	

Source: Field survey (2024)

Results in Table 6 indicated that the square root of AVE for each construct on itself was higher than the construct's relationship with other constructs. The square root of AVEs depicted in bold and is seen to be higher, hence this study meets the discriminant validity criterion based on Fornell and Larcker (1981). The cross-loading criteria required that indicators should weight more on their actual construct than on their cross-loadings. Indicators were expected to load significantly on the constructs they measured as compared to their loadings on constructs that they do not measure. Results in Table 6 showed that the indicators measured higher on their corresponding constructs than other non-measuring constructs.

The discriminant validity was further assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion. For constructs that were similar conceptually, an HTMT value of 0.9 or less was deemed acceptable, hence depicting the absence of discriminant validity problems (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt 2015). The HTMT criterion was the most robust and generally accepted measure of discriminant validity since it has higher performance in terms of the Fornell-Larcker and cross-loading methods of assessing discriminant

validity. Results from discriminant validity using the HTMT criterion were shown in Table 6. All the HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.90 which meant there were no discriminant validity problems. It also implied that the constructs were empirically discrete from each other.

Structural model assessment

After examining the outer model, a structural model assessment which refers to examining the hypothesised relationships in the inner model by following certain systematic steps (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2021). To begin with, it is necessary to assess the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive power (Q^2Predict). The procedure for the structural model assessment has been discussed in subsequent sections.

Size and Significance of Structural Model Path Coefficients

The hypothesis of the study was examined by assessing the size of the effect and significance of the structural model using results from bootstrapping in Smart PLS 4. The path coefficient, significance levels (p values), and t-statistics were used as the criteria for redefining the significance of the inner model. The t-statistics and the p-values should be greater or equal to, and less or equal to the chosen significance level respectively, that the t-statistic should be greater or equal to 1.65, 1.96, and 2.57 with the p-values lying below or less than or equal to 10%, 5% and 1% confidence levels respectively (Acquah, 2020).

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination of the mediating variable (Customer Empowerment) and the study's endogenous constructs R^2 values are presented in Table 7.

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Table 7: Coefficient of Determination (R2)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Customer Empowerment	0.680	0.676
Customer Loyalty	0.698	0.693

Source: Field survey (2024)

Before examining the R^2, it is necessary to examine the inner model for collinearity issues if it does not compromise the outcomes of the regression analysis. VIF values in Table 7 show that collinearity issues were absent since the VIFs were below 5 and 3 (Becker, Ringle, Sarstedt & Völckner, 2015). Due to the absenteeism of collinearity issues, the R^2 of the endogenous variables were observed. The R^2 embodies the collective effect of the exogenic variable on the endogenic variable (Hair *et al*., 2014). It is also seen as an indicator of the model's explanatory power since it assesses the variance that is elucidated in each of the endogenous constructs (Hair *et al*., 2014; Shmueli & Koppius, 2011). R^2 values range between 0 and 1 and numbers close to 1 indicate that the exogenous construct significantly predicts the endogenous construct and satisfactory R^2 values ought to be above 0.1 (Hair *et al*., 2019).

In assessing the explanatory power of the model values of 0.25, 0.5, and 0.75 are considered weak, moderate, and substantial respectively (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). In the structural model, the endogenous variables include Customer Loyalty. The mediating variable (Customer Empowerment) and the study's endogenous constructs R^2 values are presented in Table 7 are

0.698, and 0.680 for CL and CE, respectively. This means that 68.0% of the variation in CE is accounted for by the CL. Moreover, 69.8% is accounted for by the CL, respectively. All the R^2 values presented in Table 7 are above 0.1, hence the model is said to have in-sample predictive power.

Predictive Power (Q^2 Predict)

The predictive power of the model presented in Figure 2 are arranged in accordance with the study's suppositions and the results for same are offered in Table 8. In the next sections, the PLS Predict method for examining the out-of-sample prediction power of a model are shown by the hypothesis and carefully discussed.

Table 8: Q^2 Predict Results

	Q^2 predict	PLS-SEM RMSE	LM RMSE	PLS-SEM MAE	LM MAE
CL1	0.396	0.801	0.831	0.596	0.615
CL2	0.450	0.756	0.794	0.582	0.607
CL3	0.442	0.722	0.720	0.563	0.573
CL4	0.457	0.755	0.793	0.589	0.607

Source: Field survey (2024)

Shmueli, Ray, Estrada and Chatla (2016) propose the PLS Predict method for examining the out-of-sample prediction power of a model using results from Q^2predict. This is because in-sample prediction techniques use a single (the same) sample in estimating the model as well as predicting results, hence increasing the likelihood of overprediction of the model's predictive ability (over-fitting problem) (Hair *et al*., 2020). PLS prediction produces MAE and RMSE values against which the key endogenous construct's

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Q^2predict is compared to its extrapolative bearing in the model (Hair *et al*., 2019).

MAE (mean absolute error) helps to examine the mean size of errors in a combination of estimates, and it does not consider their direction. The MAE finds the mean of the complete variances that exist between the real observations and the estimates and their difference have the same magnitude (Shmueli *et al*., 2019). As compared to MAE, RMSE calculates the square root of the squares of the means of variances flanked by predicted and actual observations, hence it attaches greater magnitude to significant errors which may likely influence the results (Hair *et al*., 2019; Shmueli, Sarstedt, Hair, Cheah, Ting, Vaithilingam, & Ringle 2019).

Moreover, Hair *et al*. (2019) assert that the key endogenous construct should be considered when using the PLS Predict results to weigh the predictive implication of the model. The key endogenous concept for this study was Customer Loyalty (CL). The model is said to have extrapolative power if the Q^2Predict values for the key endogenous variables are positive and significant (Hair *et al*., 2020; Shmueli *et al*., 2019).

Since results in Table 8 reveal positive values for the Q^2Predict of the key endogenous constructs' indicators, this model can be concluded to have medium predictive power. As a guide, Shmueli *et al*. (2019), assert that when the majority of the indicators for the key endogenous construct have high prediction errors (that is if the MAE and RMSE of major indicators of the PLS process are higher than the LM), the model is said to take medium prediction influence even though this prediction ability is low.

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Effect size (f²) assessment

The effect sizes of the constructs used in the study thus social customer relationship management practices are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Effect size (f2)

Structural path	f² Effect size
CE -> CL	0.238
CK -> CE	0.001
CSQ -> CE	0.029
CSQ -> CL	0.039
IMC -> CE	0.079
IMC -> CL	0.090
OC -> CE	0.018
OC -> CL	0.022
VAS -> CE	0.001
VAS -> CL	0.036

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 9 showcases effect sizes, which measure the degree and extent of the association between two variables. These sizes indicate how one variable effect another. The f^2 measure, as suggested by Cohen (1988), is used to evaluate changes in R^2 when a specific construct is removed from the model. Interpreting f2, values above 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 signify small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Hair *et al*., 2019). In Table 9, it is evident that Customer Empowerment (CE) has a moderately strong influence on CL, whereas social CRM practices have comparatively smaller effects on both CE and CL.

Size and Significance of Structural Model Path Coefficients

This section aims to analyse, interpret, and explain the importance and impact of the research results in relation to the study's hypothesis being

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examined. The structural coefficients' significance is aligned with the study's hypothesis, as demonstrated in Table 10. In the subsequent sections, the extent and implication of the structural path coefficients will be discussed according to the hypotheses.

Table 10: Path Coefficients Results

Paths	Path coefficient (β)	T statistics	P values	Decision rule
CK -> CL	-0.157	2.907	0.004	H1a (Not Supported)
CSQ -> CL	0.247	4.596	0.000	H1b (Supported)
IMC -> CL	0.138	2.106	0.035	H1c (Supported)
OC -> CL	0.028	0.448	0.654	H1d (Not Supported)
VAS -> CL	0.167	2.868	0.004	H1e (Supported)
CK -> CE	-0.035	0.631	0.528	H2a (Not Supported)
CSQ -> CE	0.175	3.222	0.001	H2b (Supported)
IMC -> CE	0.304	4.879	0.000	H2c (Supported)
OC -> CE	0.143	2.570	0.010	H2d (Supported)
VAS -> CE	0.350	6.082	0.000	H2e (Supported)
CE -> CL	0.475	8.848	0.000	H3a (Supported)
CSQ -> CE -> CL	0.083	3.220	0.001	H4a (Supported)
OC -> CE -> CL	0.068	2.465	0.014	H4b (Supported)
IMC -> CE -> CL	0.144	4.273	0.000	H4c (Supported)
CK -> CE -> CL	-0.016	0.619	0.536	H4d (Not Supported)
VAS -> CE -> CL	0.166	4.369	0.000	H34 (Supported)

Source: Field survey (2024)

For this study, the standard where the t-statistic should be greater or equivalent to 1.96 or the p-value less or equal to 5% is used to find the significant path coefficients amid the independent constructs and the dependent constructs.

Discussion

This part aims to analyse the importance of the results in connection to the research suppositions being examined. It also involves sharing any novel comprehensions or perspectives that arose from the study outcomes.

Social Customer Relationship Management Practices and Customer Loyalty

The goal of the first objective was to assess the effect of SCRM practices on CL of hospitality industry in Ghana. It was further hypothesised after an extensive literature review that SCRM practices affects CL.

Customer Knowledge (CK) and Customer Loyalty (CL)

To begin with, from Table 10, the path coefficient (β) of the effect CK on CL was -0.157, which indicated a negative effect. However, the t-statistics of 2.907 exceeded the threshold value of 1.96, which signified a statistically significant with observed p-value of 0.004 which was less than 0.05 of the traditional confidence intervals. The outcomes suggests that CK has a significant and negative effect on CL in the hotel sector. This means that as customers gain more knowledge about a hotel, such as its services, policies, promotional offers, customer reception, branding, and pricing their loyalty to the hotel actually decreases. This is contrary to what was expected in (H1a), as the hypothesis (H1a) stated that CK positively and significantly affects CL. Instead, the findings suggest that there is a negative effect of CK on CL.

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This finding is statistically significant, as indicated by t-statistics of 2.907, which exceeds the threshold value of 1.96. The observed p-value of 0.004 is also less than 0.05, which is the traditional threshold for statistical significance. This result is braced by previous research in the hotel sector. For example, a study by Chen and Tsai (2015) found that over-servicing can lead to customer dissatisfaction and decreased loyalty, which is consistent with the negative association between CK and CL found in this study. Another study by Kandampully (2002) found that customers' perceived knowledge of a hotel's services and information can actually lead to decreased loyalty, as customers may feel that they are being taken advantage of or that they are not getting good worth for their money.

In practical terms, this could mean that hotels may inadvertently create a sense of over-saturation or information overload among their customers, leading to decreased loyalty. For example, a hotel may provide too much information about its facilities, policies, and services, which can make customers feel overwhelmed and less likely to return. Built on the underlying literature reviewed, the present study opposes the findings of Mohammed and Rashid (2012) who discovered that CK has a positive impact on CL, while Ong *et al*. (2018) showed that focusing on excellent customer knowledge can enhance CL.

Customer Service Quality (CSQ) and Customer Loyalty (CL)

Also, from Table 10, the path coefficient for the effect of CSQ on CL was 0.247, indicating a positive effect. From the results in Table 10, the positive changes in customer service quality were significant at a p-value of 0.000 significant level, which justified the hypothesis that CSQ have a

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substantial effect on CL in Ghana. The path coefficient of 0.247 indicates that a positive association occurs between CSQ and CL in the hotel sector. This means that for every 1% increase in CSQ, CL is expected to increase by 0.24%. In other words, a hotel that improves its customer service quality by 1% can expect to see a 0.24% increase in customer loyalty, assuming all other factors remain constant.

Statistically, the results proved that when hotels improve their customer service quality, such as implementing a new customer feedback system, providing friendly and attentive staff, efficient check-in processes, and prompt responses to guest complaints, customer loyalty is likely to increase. Conversely, if hotels deteriorate their CSQ, CL is likely to decrease. Accordingly, a study by (Malik *et al*. 2012) on "the quality of service is a key aspect in defining customer satisfaction and loyalty" (p. 42). The study found that hotels that provided high-quality service, such as friendly and attentive staff, were more likely to retain customers.

Another study by Bostanji (2013) found that "hotel guests' perceived quality of service was a substantial predictor of their loyalty" (p. 64). The study finding was in accordance with the supposition of relationship marketing theory which asserted that hotels should emphasis on refining their service quality to increase CL. The T-statistic of 4.596 indicates that the relationship between CSQ and CL is statistically substantial. This suggests that the relationship between CSQ and CL is not just due to chance, but rather is a real effect.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Customer Loyalty (CL)

Again, results in Table 10 clearly indicated a positive effect between IMC and CL with path coefficient (β) of 0.138. The t statistic obtained was 2.106, with p-value of 0.035 which is statistically significant. This supported hypothesis H1c, as the effect IMC on CL was significant on a p-value of 0.035. The study showed a positive effect between Integrated Marketing Channel (IMC) and CL in the hotel sector. This means that when hotels use a consistent and coordinated marketing approach, it can lead to increased customer loyalty. The path coefficient (β) of 0.138 indicates a moderate positive effect, which proposes that a 1% increase in IMC efforts can lead to a 0.138% increase in CL. This is a significant finding, as hotels that prioritize IMC are likely to see a direct impact on customer loyalty.

The t-statistic of 2.106 and p-value of 0.035 specify that the effect is statistically substantial, which supports the hypothesis stating IMC has a positive and substantial effect on CL. This is reliable with prior research in the hotel sector, which has shown that effective marketing communication can lead to increased CL and retention (Hsu *et al*., 2016; Kotler *et al*., 2009). Moreover, a study by Yuniaris (2011) showed that IMC have a positive and substantial effect on CL. This conclusion was further supported by Mabkhot *et al*. (2017), which also highlighted a positive association between integrated marketing channels and CL. Theoretically, the study was in line with the thought of Hakim *et al.* (2017) which labelled it as the institution of a valuable relationship amid the organization and its customers or partners to increase loyalty.

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Practically, IMC can be achieved through various means, such as coordinated messaging across channels, consistent branding, and targeted advertising. By implementing a comprehensive IMC strategy, hotels can form a robust expressive construction with customers, leading to improved CL and repeat purchase.

Online Communities (OC) and Customer Loyalty (CL)

Also, the path coefficient for the effect OC on CL as indicated in Table 10 was known as 0.028, indicating a positive effect. The positive changes in OC were indicated as non-significant at a p-value of 0.654 significant level, which denounced the hypothesis that stated that OC have a substantial effect on CL in Ghana. The findings presented there is no substantial positive effect of online communities/social media usage on CL in the Ghanaian hotel sector. The path coefficient of 0.028 indicates a positive impact, but the p-value of 0.654 is higher than the conservative significance level of 0.05, which means that the relationship is not statistically significant.

This outcome was not supported by prior studies, which have shown that OC positively affect CL (Lee *et al*., 2011; Kim *et al*., 2014; Kumar *et al*., 2016; Clark & Melaco, 2013; Aldaihani & Ali, 2018). However, it imperative to note the study's findings are specific to the Ghanaian hotel segment and may not be applicable to other industries or contexts. Furthermore, the study's findings indicate the importance of considering the local setting and market dynamics in Ghana. The study suggests that the lack of substantial effect of online communities/social media usage on customer loyalty may be owing to it limited use of social media by customers in Ghana (Kotler *et al*., 2014). Therefore, hotels may have to familiarise their marketing approaches to the

blend of online and local context and focus on other marketing channels that are more effective in reaching their target audience.

Value-added Service (VAS) and Customer Loyalty (CL)

Finally, the association between VAS and CL showed a positive effect from the results in Table 10 with the path coefficient (β) of 0.167. However, the t-statistics loaded 2.868 which in this case exceeded the threshold value of 1.96, indicating statistically significant effect with a p-value loading of 0.004 which was less than the 0.05 significant level. This supported the hypothesis H1e, indicating a significant effect of VAS on CL. Again, the finding indicated that the Value-Added Services (VAS) offered by a hotel have a positive effect on the CL of its guests. In other words, the more value-added services a hotel provides, such as free breakfast, complimentary room upgrades, or personalized concierge services, the more likely its customers are to become loyal to the hotel.

In the hotel sector, this means that hotels can improve customer loyalty by offering more value-added services. The coefficient of the VAS was 0.167, which implied that a percentage increase in VAS will have the 0.16 percentage increase on CL because the p-value was significant, all other things hold equal. However, considering the available empirical studies, the study supported with a study by Ab Hamid *et al*. (2011) which revealed that the VAS have positive and significant effect on CL. It was also established by Shaw, Bailey, and Williams, (2011) which concluded that there is a positive influence among VAS and CL.

Social CRM Practices (SCRMP) and Customer Empowerment (CE) in Ghana

The goal of the subsequent objective was to evaluate the effect of SCRM practices on CE of hospitality industry in Ghana. It was further hypothesised based on the empirical literature review that SCRM practices affects CE.

Customer Knowledge (CK) and Customer Empowerment (CE)

Accordingly, from the outcomes in Table 10, the path coefficient (β) for the relationship between CK and CE was -0.035, which indicated a negative effect. However, the t-statistics loaded 0.631 which in this case exceeded the threshold value of 1.96, indicating statistically non-significant effect with a p-value loading of 0.528 which was greater than the 0.05 significant level. The findings suggest there is a non-significant relationship between Customer Knowledge and Customer Empowerment in the hotel sector. The path coefficient (β) of -0.035 indicates a negative effect, which may seem counterintuitive. However, the t-statistics loaded 0.631, exceeding the threshold value of 1.96, signifying that the effect is not statistically substantial. This shows that the relationship amid CK and CE is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant.

The result is not surprising, given the complexity of the hotel segment in Ghana and the varied needs and predilections of customers. This however, the findings are conflicting to the outcome of (Söderlund *et al*., 2017; Bagozzi *et al*., 2016; Jayachandran *et al*., 2004). Hoteliers may not be able to significantly influence customer empowerment through customer knowledge alone (Kotler *et al*., 2014). From a more practical implication perspective,

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hotel managers may need to focus on other factors that can drive customer empowerment, such as providing personalized services, offering loyalty programs, or investing in staff training. By doing so, hotels can create a more empowered and satisfied customer base leading to increased CL and retention.

Customer Service Quality (CSQ) and Customer Empowerment (CE)

From Table 10, The findings propose a positive association between CSQ and CE in the hotel sector. The path coefficient of 0.175 indicates a significant and statistically substantial effect, with a p-value of 0.001, indicating that the relationship is highly unlikely to occur by chance. This finding supports hypothesis H2b, which posits that CSQ has a strong positive effect on CE. This result is consistent with previous studies in the hotel sector that have found a positive relationship between CSQ and CE (Kotler & Keller, 2006; Lee *et al*., 2014). For example, Yoon and Kim (2018) found that customer satisfaction with service quality was a substantial prognosticator of CL, which is a key aspect of customer empowerment. Similarly, Lee *et al*., 2014; Wang et al., 2018; Lee & Kim, 2015) revealed that hotel customers' observations of customer service quality were positively associated to their overall satisfaction and empowerment.

The hands-on suggestion of this finding is that hotels should prioritize improving their CSQ to enhance their customers' CE. This can be attained by offering high-quality service, such as attentive staff, prompt response to customer requests, and clean and comfortable facilities. Hotels can also consider implementing training programs for staff to ensure they are equipped to provide excellent service (Finn *et al*., 2011). By doing so, hotels can upsurge customer loyalty and retention, which can lead to increased revenue

and competitiveness. By prioritizing CSQ and CE, hotels can distinguish themselves from participants and produce a competitive advantage in the market.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Customer Empowerment (CE)

Again, results in Table 10 indicated a positive effect of IMC on CE with path coefficient (β) of 0.304. The t statistic obtained was 4.879, with p-value of 0.000 which is statistically significant. This supported the hypothesis H2c, as the relationship between IMC and CE had a p-value of 0.000 shows a highly substantial affiliation. The findings of the study indicate that Integrated Marketing Channels (IMC) have a positive effect on CE in the hotel sector. The path coefficient (β) of 0.304 suggests that for every one-unit change in IMC, there is a corresponding 0.304-unit change in CE. This relationship is statistically substantial, with a t-statistic of 4.879 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the relationship between IMC and CE is highly significant (Kotler *et al*., 2009).

This outcome ropes the hypothesis that IMC takes a positive impact on CE, which is steady with prior research in the hotel segment. For example, a study by Gao *et al*. (2017) found that effective marketing strategies, including IMC, can bring improved CE and loyalty in the hotel industry. Another finding by (Kumar *et al*., 2018; Papachasissi, 2015) suggested that IMC has a constructive effect on CE in the hotel sector. Theoretically, this highlights the importance of adopting an integrated marketing approach that incorporates multiple channels and leverages data analytics to improve understand customer behavior and preferences. Additionally, a study by Ramadan *et al.*

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(2023) discovered that integrated marketing channel increases consumer brand empowerment.

Practically, the finding posit that hotels can improve customer empowerment by adopting an integrated marketing approach that incorporates multiple conduits, such as social media, email, and tele marketing. This can be achieved by developing an inclusive marketing strategy that consider into account the different desires and preferences of different customer segments. Hotels can utilize data analytics to advance a deeper understanding of customer behavior and preferences, enabling them to tailor their marketing strategies to specific segments of their target audience, as noted by Kumar *et al*. (2016). By doing so, hotels can increase customer engagement and loyalty, leading to increased revenue and profitability.

Online Communities (OC) and Customer Empowerment (CE)

The findings in Table 10 suggest a substantial positive correlation between Online communities/Social media usage and CE in the Ghanaian hotel sector. The path coefficient of 0.143 indicates that for every 1% increase in social media usage, there is a corresponding 14.3% increase in Customer empowerment, assuming no other variables change (ceteris paribus) which is similar with a study by (Kotler *et al*., 2014). This finding has significant practical implications for Ghanaian hotel sector.

The results suggest that enhancing social network usage can bring to a meaningful and improved Customer empowerment. This is predominantly important in the Ghanaian hotel sector, where customer satisfaction is critical for recurrence business and positive word-of-mouth which is also established the conclusions of (Khan *et al*., 2017). By increasing social media usage,

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hotels can create a sense of community and engagement with their clients, which can lead to increased CL and retention (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Furthermore, the findings support the hypothesis that enhancing OC has a substantial effect on CE in Ghanaian hotel sector. This had a similar outcome with previous research that has found a positive relationship between online communities/social media usage and customer empowerment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kim *et al.,* 2019; Al-Shammari *et al*., 2020; Goa *et al*., 2020; Pedeliento *et al*., 2020).

In practical terms, these findings suggest that Ghanaian hotel businesses should prioritize increasing their social media presence and engagement. This can be attained by executing approaches such as regular posting, responding to customer comments, and using social media advertising to target potential customers. By doing so, hotels can create a more engaged and empowered customer base, which can lead to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Value-added Service (VAS) and Customer Empowerment (CE)

Finally, the relationship between VAS and CE showed a positive effect from the results in Table 12 with the path coefficient (β) 0.350. However, the t-statistics loaded 2.868 which in this case exceeded the threshold value of 1.96, indicating statistically significant effect with a p-value loading of 0.000 which was greater than the 0.05 significant level. This supported hypothesis H2e, indicating a significant relationship between VAS and CE.

Again, findings in Table 12 indicate a positive effect of VAS on CE with path coefficient (β) of 0.350. The t statistic obtained was 2.868, with p-value of 0.000 which is statistically significant. This supported hypothesis

H2e, as the influence of VAS on CE was significant on a p-value of 0.000. The results depicted that, correspondingly, VAS exerted positively significant effect on customer CE in the hotel sector. Despite any reservations, the examination findings indicated that the influence of VAS on CE was directly proportional. This revealed a substantial positive impact on the connection, which was particularly noteworthy in the Ghanaian hotel sector.

This result supported the assumption that VAS have a considerable effect on CE in the Ghanaian hotel industry, confirming its significance. The coefficient of the VAS was 0.350, which implied that a percentage increase in VAS had a 30.5% percentage increase in the rate of the CE because the p-value was significant, assuming all other factors remain constant, this conclusion supports the idea that customer Value-Added Services (VAS) have a substantial effect on Customer Empowerment (CE). As stated by Ab Hamid and his colleagues in (2011), customers experience a sense of control and empowerment when they can easily find a product or service, gain more knowledge about it, and make informed decisions.

In alignment with this idea, the outcomes of this study were unswerving with another study by Ab Hamid *et al*. (2011), which demonstrated that the VAS have a positive and substantial effect on CE. It was also confirmed by Thompson and Ratten (2021), Peterson (2020), and Brown (2020), who claim that implementing value-added services can empower customers and improve their inclusive involvement with a business. However, empirical studies validated the hypothesis that stated VAS had a positively significant effect on CE.

Customer Empowerment (CE) and Customer Loyalty (CL)

Again, the next objective was to evaluate the effect of CE on CL of hotel industry in Ghana. It was further hypothesised based on the empirical validation that CE affects CL. From Table 12, it was depicted that CE had a substantial and positive effect on CL with $\beta = 0.475$, t-statistic = 8.846, and p-value = 0.000. This outcome exceeded the expected threshold where t-statistic should be more than 1.96 and the p-value should be less than 0.05. The results led to the affirmation of the hypothesised narration that CE has a substantial and positive effect with CL of hotel firms in Ghana. CE provides hotel firms with a 47.5% likelihood of contributing to positive CL in their general competitive advantage with competing hotel brands. CE enable firms to providing customers with self-service options, such as online platforms for tracking orders, managing accounts, or seeking assistance through continuous operation.

Despite this, the empowerment theory supported the study's findings, which aligned with a study by Scheyvens and Watt (2021) that suggested customers can simplify their problem-solving process by collaborating with others and can influence how issues are addressed and resolved based on their own sense of empowerment. The research, however, validated the findings by Rishika *et al.* (2013), which demonstrated customer involvement in a company's social media platforms results in a higher frequency of visits to that company. (Singh *et al.*, 2013), also showed a positive, significant correlation between CE and CL. Consistently, Castillo (2017) discovered that customer empowerment is a crucial factor for businesses to improve customer loyalty

amid the hotel business, concluding that CE has a positive, statistically substantial effect on CL.

Social CRM practices, and Customer Loyalty through Customer Empowerment

Lastly, the study was to evaluate the effect of social CRM practices on CL through CE of hospitality industry in Ghana. It was further hypothesised based on the empirical validation that CE mediate the relationship amid SCRM practices and CL. Fast forward, from Table 10, the path coefficient for the mediation effect between CSQ to CE to CL was 0.083, which indicated a positive relationship, thereby having a T statistic of 3.220 with a significant p-value of 0.001, indicating a statistically significant effect. This assertion supported the hypothesis H4a, that CE mediate the relationship between CSQ and CL. The partial mediation was as a result of the positively, statistically substantial association amid CSQ and CL. This effect was observed without the influence of Customer Empowerment. The path coefficient for the effect amid CSQ and CL was positive and significant, with a path co-efficient (β) = 0.247 and a p-value of 0.000.

In essence, customer empowerment leads to individuals becoming proficient and assertive, enabling them to wield control (Pires *et al*., 2006). This empowerment significantly affects the association amid CL and service quality in the hotel sector in that percentage increase in CE strengthens the relationship between CSQ and CL by 0.083%. This discovery had a consistent outcome with a study by Aldaihani *et al*. (2020) which clinched that CE significantly mediated the effect of SCRM dimensions on customer retention. Practically, by embracing customer empowerment, hotel firms can foster a

loyal customer base, improve customer service quality, and maintain a positive reputation in the competitive hospitality market.

Also, from Table 10, the path coefficient for the mediating relationship between OC to CE to CL was 0.068, which indicated a positive effect, thereby having T statistic of 2.465 with a significant p-value of 0.014, indicating a statistical significance association. This assertion supported the hypothesis H4b, as stated that CE mediate the influence OC and CL. As a result, the full mediation was observed as a result of the positive and statistically significant effect of OC (Online communities) on CL (Customer Loyalty) through CE (Customer Empowerment) having a p-value of 0.014. However, without the influence of CE, the path coefficient effect of OC on CL indicated non-significant effect, which did not support the hypothesis.

In effect, study by Bell and Eisingerich (2007) defined customer empowerment as a process that aids consumers in maximizing their advantages from the products they acquire, while also assisting them in overcoming the challenges they encounter. Corollary, by fostering a high rate of loyal customer base, hotel firms can embrace customer empowerment strategies to improve the customer online communities/social media usage effect and maintain a positive reputation in the competitive hotel market in order to have a strong edge for customer loyalty.

Additionally, from Table 10, the path coefficient of the mediating effect of IMC to CE to CL was 0.144, indicating a positive relationship, with a T statistic = 4.273, which recorded a significant p-score of 0.000, hence showed a statistically significant association. This assertion supported the hypothesis H4c, quoted as "CE mediate the relationship between IMC and CL.

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In effect, the significant association between the IMC to CE to CL shows a fractional mediation of the relationship. Contrary, the association between the IMC and CL was significant on a p-value of 0.035, which was beneath the threshold of the traditional 5% confidence interval.

Moreover, this study traced the importance of customer empowerment in building long-term relations with customers. As stated by Kaur *et al*. (2020) "customer empowerment is the new battleground" in the competitive hotel industry. Therefore, hotel managers should invest in creating memorable experience for their customers to increase the level of customer empowerment. Finally, the results of this study delivered valued understandings into the relationship between IMC, CE, and CL in the Ghanaian hotel sector. The results suggest that hotels should prioritize improving customer empowerment to enhance customer loyalty.

More so, Table 10 showed a negative path coefficient for the mediating effect between CK to CE to CL was -0.016, which showed a negative influence, thereby having a T statistic of 0.619 with a p-value of 0.536, indicating a statistical non-significance. This contention refuted the hypothesis H4d, as there was no mediation of the relationship between CK and CL. Essentially, Bell and Eisingerich (2007) argued that customer empowerment involves aiding consumers in maximizing their advantages from the products they acquire and addressing the challenges they encounter. This process ultimately enhances customer loyalty. However, this finding opposes the assertion of Bell and Eisingerich (2007), which stated customer empowerment did not have any significant effect on the relationship amid CK and CL.

Theoretically, this outcome opposes the assumption of the empowerment theory.

However, this assertion was a result of the negative path coefficient (-0.157) that showed the effect between CK and CL. Again, from Table 10, the path coefficient of the effect between CK and CE showed negative relationship with a p-value = 0.524, which was not significant. More so, Table 10 showed a positive path coefficient for the mediating relationship between CK to CE to CL as 0.166, indicating a positive relationship, thereby having a T statistic of 4.369 with a p-value of 0.536, which indicated a highly statistical non-significance effect. This contention refuted the hypothesis H4d, quoted as CE mediate the relationship between CK and CL. This means that as customers become more empowered about a hotel, such as its services, policies, promotional offers, customer reception, branding, and pricing their knowledge hence loyalty to the hotel actually decreases.

Notwithstanding, the significant association between the VAS to CE to CL shows a fractional mediation of the effect. Contrary, the relationship between the VAS and CL was significant on a p-value of 0.004, which was below the threshold of the traditional 5% confidence interval. However, the relationship between the VAS and CE was also significant on a p-value score of 0.000 with positive path coefficient of 0.350. This contention supported the hypothesis H4e, as CE mediates the relationship between VAS and CL. However, in this case, it was partial mediation.

Feasibly, these findings were supported by (Hennig-Thurau *et al.,* 2013), who stated that the dynamic involvement of customers via social media is a key component that helps to shape consumer behaviour when looking at

CE by promoting customer involvement in the social CRM practices. This indicated that customer loyalty is affected by customer empowerment.

Chapter Summary

Presented in this chapter were the results from data analysis accompanied by a discussion of the findings. Data was administered and analysed using IBM SPSS and Smart PLS software was constructed on the objectives of the study. The variables of the study were SCRM practices, CE, and CL in the hotel firms in Ghana. The results presented that some of the SCRM practices, as presented in table 10, independently influenced the CE and CL of hotel firms in Ghana.

In summary, the research findings showed that customer knowledge's effect on customer loyalty was not supported. This contradicted the idea that CE enhances customer loyalty. However, a significant partial mediation effect was observed between VAS and CL, which indicated that CE partly mediates the relationship between them. The study highlighted the importance of CE in shaping consumer loyalty through social media, suggesting that customer loyalty was influenced by customer empowerment.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This research aimed to explore how implementing SCRM strategies influence customer loyalty by empowering clients in Ghana's hotel sector. The study utilized relationship theory and empowerment theory to elucidate the relationships among the study's variables. This theory provides profound insights into how hotel firms strategically manage their relationships with external entities. In doing so, the hypotheses stated below were tested in agreement with the study's objectives:

H_{1a-1e}: SCRM practices have a substantial positive impact on CL in the hotel industry.

H_{2a-2e}: SCRM practices have a substantial positive effect on CE in the hospitality industry.

H_3: Customer empowerment has a significant effect on CL in the hotel industry.

H_{4a-4e}: Customer empowerment mediate the association amid SCRM practices and CL in the hotel industry.

However, the study adopted the positivism philosophy. This philosophy gave way for the study to follow a quantitative approach and explanatory research design. Again, the study's sampling technique permitted the use of 370 respondents. However, four research objectives were set out as follows to align with the four hypotheses set for the study.

1. To determine the effect of SCRM practices on CL in the hospitality industry.

2. To examine the effect of SCRM practices on customer empowerment in the hospitality industry.

3. Examine the effect of customer empowerment on CL in the hospitality industry.

4. To assess the mediating role of CE on the effect of social customer relationship management practices on CL in the hospitality industry.

More so, the researcher used IBM SPSS statistic V27 to prepare the data and used Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM v4) to analyse the data gathered. Nevertheless, this chapter sought to provide a comprehensive summary, conclusion and recommendations to the effect of the adoption of social CRM practices on CL via CE in the Ghanaian hotel industry.

Summary of Findings

Using the relationship theory and the empowerment theory, the results of the study were accessible in accordance of the hypotheses of the study.

SCRM practices and Customer Loyalty in Ghana

To begin with, it was revealed from the discussion there was a positive effect between SCRM practices and CL in Ghana. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrated that CK had a adverse effect on CL meaning the more customer acquire more knowledge about the hotel brand their loyalty decreases. However, improvements in customer service quality, increased social media and online community usage, utilizing integrated marketing channels, and offering VAS all had a positive effect on CL. Interestingly, despite the constructive effect of online communities/social media usage on customer loyalty, its effect was non-significantly within the context, Ghana. Meanwhile,

it was discovered that controlling online communities/social media usage caused significant effect on customer loyalty.

Again, it was discovered that there was no significant effect amid online communities/social media usage and customer loyalty in Ghana. However, it was revealed that increases in customer knowledge, despite its negative association with customer loyalty, were significant, meaning a percentage increase in customer knowledge would negatively affect customer loyalty, while online communities/social media usage had positive association with customer loyalty, yet its association was non-significant. Again, CSQ, integrated marketing channel and VAS recognised that their effect had a positively substantial effect on CL. Meaning, as CSQ, IMC and VAS falls customer loyalty also falls in Ghana, ceteris paribus.

SCRM Practices and Customer Empowerment in Ghana

Moreover, it was revealed there was a positive associative effect between SCRM practices and customer empowerment in Ghana. Nevertheless, the outcomes demonstrated that CK had a negative effect on CE which showed that customers less empowered base on their gain about a hotel brand. However, improvements in customer service quality, increased social media and online community usage, utilizing integrated marketing channels, and offering value-added services all had a positive and substantial effect on CE in Ghana. Meanwhile, it was revealed that in the context customer knowledge causes a negative non-substantial effect on CE.

Nevertheless, it was revealed that there was no significant effect between CK and CE in Ghana. However, it was revealed from the discussion that improvements in customer service quality, increased social media and

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online community usage, utilizing integrated marketing channels, and offering value-added services all had a positive and substantial effect on CE in Ghana. Meaning, as customer service quality, online communities/social media usage, integrated marketing channel and value-added service fall, customer empowerment also falls in Ghana, ceteris paribus.

Customer Empowerment and Customer Loyalty in Ghana

The study's results also presented that embracing customer empowerment exerts positive and statistical significance effect on CL. Its effect was found to be positive. However, while the positive variations in customer empowerment exerted a substantial positive effect on CL, the negative changes in customer empowerment exerted massive effect on CL in Ghana. This means that, to increase customer loyalty by hotel firms in the study area, owner-managers should embrace customer loyalty since it had the tendency to increase their firm's loyalty ratio in Ghana.

SCRM Practices and Customer Loyalty through Customer Empowerment

In summary, the study's results showed that embracing customer empowerment exerted positive and statistically significance effect on CL. Its effect was found to be positively associated. However, the positive changes in customer empowerment exerted a substantial positive effect on CL; the negative changes in CE exerted massive effect on CL in Ghana. This means that, to increase CL by hotel firms in the study area, owner-managers should embrace CL since it had the tendency to increase their firms' CL in Ghana.

Moreover, it was revealed that CE mediates the significant effect between social CRM practices and CL. However, it was found that CE did not

mediate the association between CK and CL in the study's context. However, the positive changes in customer empowerment exert a partial mediation between CSQ, IMC, VAS and customer loyalty. Hence, empowerment exerted a full mediation between OC/social media usage and CL.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this research, the following deductions were made:

The study revealed a statistically substantial negative effect of Customer Knowledge (CK) on Customer Loyalty (CL) in the hotel sector. This finding is contrary to the expected positive effect and suggests that hotels may inadvertently create a sense of over-saturation or information overload among customers, leading to decreased loyalty. Again, the results discovered a significant positive relationship amid CSQ and CL in the hotel sector. The path coefficient of 0.247 indicates that a 1% increase in CSQ leads to a 0.24% increase in CL. The results propose that improving CSQ can increase customer loyalty. Besides, there was a positive and significant effect of IMC on CL in the hotel sector. This suggests that hotels can increase customer loyalty by using a consistent and coordinated marketing approach. Additionally, the findings discovered that online communities/social media usage had no significant positive effect on CL in the Ghanaian hotel sector. This contradicted previous studies, but highlights the importance of understanding local context and market dynamics. Finally, there was a substantial positive effect of VAS on CL in the hotel sector. The results suggest that hotels can improve CL by offering more value-added services.

More so, from objective two, the results find a non-significant relationship between Customer Knowledge and CE in the Ghanaian hotel sector, contradicting prior research. This suggests that hoteliers may not be able to significantly influence customer empowerment through customer knowledge alone. Additionally, the outcome suggests a strong positive relationship amid CSQ and CE in the hotel sector. To enhance customer empowerment, hotels should prioritize improving CSQ by providing high-quality service, training staff, and implementing customer-centric programs. Furthermore, the study finds a positive effect of Integrated Marketing Channels (IMC) on Customer Empowerment (CE) in the hotel sector. The outcomes backed the hypothesis that IMC has a positive effect on CE, meaning hotels can improve customer empowerment by adopting an integrated marketing approach that incorporates multiple channels, leveraging data analytics to understand customer behavior and preferences.

Also, there was a significant positive effect amid OC and CE in the Ghanaian hotel sector. The results suggest that enhancing social media usage led to improved customer empowerment, which is crucial for recurrence business and positive word-of-mouth. In summary, the results found a significant positive association amid VAS and CE in the Ghanaian hotel sector. The results indicate that a 1% increase in VAS led to a 30.5% increase in CE, allowing customers to feel more in control and empowered when making decisions.

Moreso, the results revealed that CE has a significant and positive effect on CL of hotel firms in Ghana. The results support the empowerment theory, which suggests that customers can simplify their problem-solving

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process by collaborating with others and influencing issue resolution. The results align with prior studies, highlighting the importance of CE in improving customer loyalty.

Finally, CE plays a substantial stance in connecting CSQ, IMC, VAS, and OC to CL. It partially mediates these relationships, while fully mediating the outcome of online communities on CL. Hence, it was concluded that there was the need for hotel firms to intensify their social customer relationship management practices projects as they would aid their customer loyalty process.

Recommendations

Regarding the research findings, the succeeding recommendations were proposed:

To mitigate this, it's recommended that hotels should prioritize providing relevant and concise information to customers, avoiding over-servicing and ensuring that customers feel valued and satisfied. By striking a balance between providing necessary information and avoiding information overload, hotels can foster stronger CL. Additionally, it was suggested that hotels should include employing a customer feedback system, providing friendly and attentive staff, efficient check-in processes, and prompt responses to guest complaints. By focusing on improving service quality, hotels should increase customer loyalty and retain customers. More so, it was found that IMC can be achieved through coordinated messaging, consistent branding, and targeted advertising.

To achieve IMC, its recommended that hotels should implement a comprehensive marketing strategy that creates a robust expressive

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construction with customers, leading to improved CL and repeat purchases. However, with online communities/social media usage, it was recommended that Hotels in Ghana should focus on social media channels that are more effective in reaching their target audience, such as WhatsApp or Facebook. Hotels should also consider using both online and offline marketing channels, such as local advertising or community events, to reach customers. Therefore, it is recommended that hotels focus on providing high-quality VAS, such as free breakfast, complimentary room upgrades, and personalized concierge services, to increase customer loyalty.

Secondly, from objective two, it was recommended that Hotel managers should focus on other factors that drive customer empowerment in different cultural and contextual jurisdiction, such as personalized services, loyalty programs, customer trust and staff training to increased customer empowerment. It was further recommended that for hotel sector to foster customer empowerment, they should prioritize CSQ, to distinguish themselves from competitors and produce a competitive advantage in the market. Again, hotel firms should Implement strategies such as regular posting, responding to customer comments, and using social media advertising to target potential customers. Moreso, Hotels in Ghana should implement and identify areas of improvement of value-added services to enhance customer empowerment.

In addition, since increased customer empowerment improves CL, as per the study's outcomes, it is recommended that hotel companies Hotel firms in Ghana should invest in customer empowerment initiatives, such as online platforms and social media engagement, to adoptive a sense of ownership and responsibility amid customers. This can be achieved through training staff to

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provide exceptional customer service, offering self-service options, and encouraging customer feedback and participation. By empowering customers, hotel firms can improve customer loyalty, increase repeat business, and ultimately enhance their competitive advantage in the market.

Ultimately, this research indicates that hotel businesses aiming to boost and enhance customer loyalty through online platforms must prioritize utilizing multiple integrated channels with customer-focused social media content. Hotel managers should employ various social media formats to keep customers informed about the hotel's brand-related updates. This evidence can influence and stimulate customers to make decisions regarding their hotel visits. Social media tools enable customers to take stake in pertinent information about products, brands, and services, potentially encouraging them to discuss their recent experiences and exchange hotel-related recommendations and opinions. This word-of-mouth exchange fosters stronger relationships between customers and the hotel, ultimately increasing customer loyalty.

In summary, the outcomes of this study presented that the mediating effect of customer empowerment, which enables social customer relationship management practices to impact CL, is a crucial instrument in the hotel sector. The final suggestion advises that the competitive edge will benefit the most adaptable hotels capable of addressing the ever-changing market landscape and integrating real-time customer empowerment and SCRM strategies.

Suggestions for Further Research

Potential areas for forthcoming investigations arise from the limitations present in this study. Some limitations were identified within the research,

such as focusing on the intention to adopt rather than actual usage of social CRM practices. Consequently, future work could delve into the context of real usage. Additionally, this study examined social CRM adoption intentions from the customer's standpoint. It would be valuable for future researchers to consider the organizational perspective as well. Furthermore, the study's population was exclusively from Ghana, restricting the generalization of the findings. To overcome this, future study should discover different cultures or populations. Lastly, the sample size consisted of 354 customers, which may limit generalization to larger populations. To tackle this, future studies should investigate an extra extensive sample size for broader generalization.

Additionally, our research builds upon the current understanding of social customer relationship management approaches; however, it exclusively concentrates on the hotel industry in Ghana. To achieve a broader application, it is crucial to analyse the same model in various other industries. Despite previous studies indicating that empowerment may lead to unfavourable outcomes, this study explores the negative side of customer empowerment. Consequently, customer empowerment serves as a mediating factor. In forthcoming studies, other potential mediators could be examined, which includes perceived value, trust, fulfilment, and customer engagement at the individual level, as well as brand familiarity.

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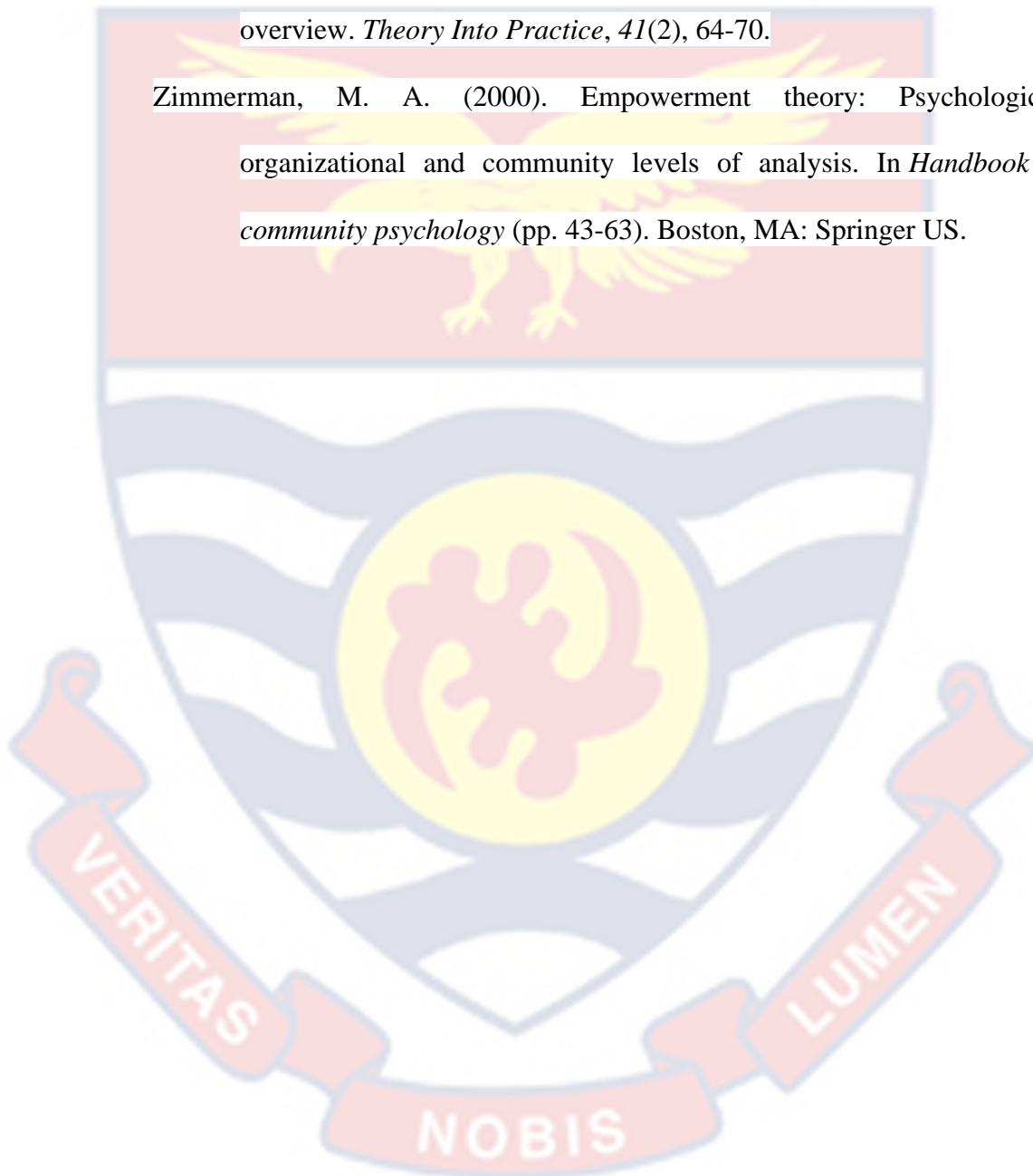
APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND SUPPLY CHAIN

MANAGEMENT

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HOTEL SECTOR CUSTOMERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

This questionnaire is to solicit information on the **"Social Customer Relationship Management, Customer Empowerment and Customer Loyalty in the Ghanaian Hospitality Sector."** The researcher is a student at the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management, School of Business, University of Cape Coast Ghana. You are hereby invited to kindly share your views on the issue under investigation. The answers gathered would be used strictly for academic purposes and hence, your confidentiality is critically assured. Thanks for your time and accepting to partake in the study.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender of respondents.

   a. Male   [ ]   b. Female [ ]

Age.

   a.   20 – 30 [ ]   b. 31 – 40 [ ]   c. 41 – 50 [ ]   d. 50+ [ ]

Please specify your education qualification.

   a.   Secondary [   ] b. Bachelor's degree [ ] c. Master's degree [   ] d**.**

   Doctorate degree [ ] e. Others (Kindly specify) _____

Occupation.

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a. Lecturer/Teacher [ ]   b. Doctor/Nurse [ ]   c. Pensioner [ ]   d.

Student [ ]

e. Farmer [ ]   f. Other (Kindly specify) _____

Monthly Income.

a. Less than ₵1000 [ ]   b. less than ₵2000 [ ]   c. less than ₵3000 [ ]

d. ₵3000+ [ ]

Purpose of staying at this hotel.

a. Professional Service and Hospitality [ ]   b. Comfort and Convenient

location [ ]   c. Safety and Security [ ]   d. Amenities and Facilities [

]

SECTION B: SOCIAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Please specify the degree of your agreement with the subsequent statements by

ticking (√) the appropriate number (5 = Strongly Agreement, 4 = Agree, 3 =

Neutral, 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree)

"Social Customer Relationship Management"							
Statement			1	2	3	4	5
Customer Knowledge **(CK)**	CK1	This hotel has a user-friendly knowledge platform for customers to quickly find the information they require.					
	CK2	This hotel has tailored special marketing activities for the customers based on their personal preferences.					
	CK3	This hotel has systemized the frequently encountered problems with their solutions on the hotel's website for customers to find these solutions needful.					

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	CK4	This hotel is able to answer customers' queries in a professional manner.					
	CK5	This hotel adopts social networking sites to empower customers to have collaborating communications with them.					
Customer Service Quality **(CSQ)**	CSQ1	Customers complaints are handled professionally.					
	CSQ2	Customers receive prompt confirmation on reservation.					
	CSQ3	Within 48 hours, customer service responses.					
	CSQ4	In replying to inquiries, customer service is professional.					
	CSQ5	Customers immediately receive notification on reservation issues.					
	CSQ6	This hotel's physical facilities are visually appealing					
Integrated Marketing Channels **(IMC)**	IMC1	Internet bookings can be verified using a tangible method on the hotel grounds.					
	IMC2	Customers have the ability to check their bookings made through non-digital channels, such as phone calls, using the internet.					
	IMC3	Clients have the option to cancel or modify reservations made over the phone through the hotel's online platform.					
	IMC4	Clients have the option to modify or cancel a booking they made on the website by reaching out to a customer service representative via a phone call.					
	IMC5	This hotel integrates social media with					

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		other online marketing channels to address customer issues.					
Online Communities /Use of social media (OC)	OC1	This hotel employs social media tools such as TripAdvisor, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google, etc. to interact with its customers.					
	OC2	This hotel permits share/discussion material with other hotel guests on the social media platform.					
	OC3	Customers are able to obtain useful information about this hotel through social media.					
	OC4	This hotel's website includes hyperlinks to its social media pages.					
	OC5	The hotel makes good use of social media to connect its customers.					
	OC6	I find remarks about this hotel on social media to be beneficial to my choice of hotel.					
Value-added Services (VAS)	VAS1	This hotel's services are well packaged and affordable.					
	VAS2	This hotel's service packages are flexible and easily accessible.					
	VAS3	This hotel suggests more assortments of services					
	VAS4	Services offered by this hotel are up to date with the current drift.					
	VAS5	This hotel combines information from their social networking site to relate with customers to design offers that meet customers' needs					
	VAS6	This hotel provides customers with supportive systems (assistance and					

		provision they need) to help them get value for money.					
Customer Empowerment (CE)	CE1	My habit often involves sharing my opinions on the quality of goods and services with others.					
	CE2	I believe that this hotel shares substantial details about their offerings through social media platforms.					
	CE3	I feel confident about this hotel's product information and promotion on social media.					
	CE4	I think commendations about this hotel's products and services on social media are useful.					
	CE5	I feel respectable because of my ability to influence the selections offered to me by this hotel.					
	CE6	With the information I get from this hotel's website and social media pages, I feel I am in control.					
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL1	I will recommend this hotel to others.					
	CL2	I have a positive emotive relation with this hotel.					
	CL3	I intend to revisit/continue using this hotel.					
	CL4	I will reflect this hotel as my top choice when I need hotel services.					
	CL5	I intend to switch from this hotel to a competing brand.					
	CL6	I will say constructive things to other individuals about this hotel.					

THANK YOU

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APPENDIX B

The central region of Ghana is home to several star-rated hotels, ranging from budget-friendly options to luxury resorts. According to the Ghana Tourism Authority (2022), here is a breakdown of the number of star-rated hotels in the central region:

1-star hotels: 154

2-star hotels: 74

3-star hotels: 117

4-star hotels: 15

5-star hotels: 0

According to various hotel review websites such as Booking.com, TripAdvisor, and Hotels.com, here are the number of 3 and 4-star rated hotels in the Central region of Ghana:

1. Cape Coast: 14 hotels

Ridge royal hotel, Pempamsie hotel, Golden Beach Hotel, Cape Coast Beach Hotel, and Atlantic Hotel.

2. Elmina: 7 hotels

Elmina Beach Resort, Elmina Inn, and Coconut Grove Beach Resort.

3. Mankessim: 5 hotels

Mankessim Royal Hotel, Mankessim Gardens Hotel, and Agona Nkwanta Hotel.

4. Winneba: 4 hotels

Winneba Royal Hotel, Winneba Palace Hotel, and Abura Waterfalls Hotel.

5. Saltpond: 3 hotels

Saltpond Beach Hotel, Saltpond Resort, and Royal Saltpond Hotel.

6. Assin Foso: 2 hotels

Assin Foso Hotel and Akropong Hills Resort and hotel.